

NAZARETH (AFP) — An Israeli-Arab lorry driver was sentenced to 30 years in prison Wednesday for taking an Islamist militant suicide bomber to Tel Aviv, judicial sources said. The court in Nazareth ruled that Said Suleiman was guilty of complicity to murder and terrorism for taking a suicide bomber from the Gaza Strip to Tel Aviv in the back of his lorry in March last year. On March 4, the bomber blew himself up in a crowded shopping centre, killing 13 passers-by and injuring 113 others. Mr. Suleiman has insisted he knew nothing of his passenger's motives, and his lawyer Sadek Nasser said he would appeal against the sentence. "I did not know this Palestinian who was hitch-hiking when I picked him up. He simply told me he was a student at the University of Bir Zeit," Mr. Suleiman, who lives in northern Israel, told the court.

Jordan Times

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Egyptian lawyers sue Israel over insulting the Prophet

CAIRO (AP) — An Egyptian lawyer has sued Israel for \$10 billion in compensation for an Israeli woman's leaflet depicting Islam's prophet as a pig. Another lawyer wants Israel to pay for printing 1 billion copies of the Koran. Court officials said Wednesday the two lawyers recently filed separate cases in Egyptian courts against Israel, seeking retribution for recent anti-Islamic incidents in the West Bank town of Hebron that infuriated Muslims around the world. Such lawsuits are not unusual for the two lawyers who are known for raising cases — mostly unsuccessfully — against states, institutions and celebrities in the name of Islam and Egypt. In the leaflet case, lawyer

Mustafa Ashoub named Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as the defendant. The trial is set for August 4.

Israel's ambassador to Egypt, Zvi Mazel is named defendant in the second case by Mustafa Roslan. No trial date has been set.

The suit stems from Palestinian allegations that Israeli troops tore up several copies of the Muslim holy book, Koran, during a raid on a Hebron elementary school last week. Israel has denied the charges.

The Israeli government apologised for the fliers, distributed by an Israeli extremist woman June 27, showing Islam's Prophet Mohammad as a pig stamping on a Koran.

The incident further worsened relations between Israel and the

Arab World at a time when the Middle East peace process has ground to a halt over Israeli moves to build Jewish settlements in traditionally Arab east Jerusalem.

Israel's embassy spokesman Lior Ben Dor said the embassy has not been notified about the cases, and it will anyway ignore them.

It is not clear if Egyptian courts have the jurisdiction to make a diplomat stand trial.

Mr. Ben-Dor said Israel condemned the fliers and it is not proved that Korans were desecrated. "So we don't understand the basis for these two (lawsuits)," he said.

Mr. Ashoub, the lawyer, wants Egyptian courts to confiscate Israeli properties in Egypt, including Israeli

cars, ships or aeroplanes that enter Egyptian boundaries, said court officials. They spoke on customary condition of anonymity.

Mr. Ashoub says the money would be received by President Hosni Mubarak for using it to construct "places of worship." He says the money could also be used to pay a monthly stipend to the families of Palestinians killed in fighting Israel, and as scholarships for students of religion.

In a widely reported trial, Mr. Ashoub sued the American Cable News Network for broadcasting an item showing the ritual genital cutting of a 10-year-old girl in 1994. Mr. Ashoub said the story tarnished Egypt's image abroad. A verdict is expected soon.

Islamic Action Front, other parties study option to follow Brotherhood's decision

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Uncertainty dominates Jordan's political arena following the decision made yesterday by the Muslim Brotherhood to boycott the 1997 parliamentary elections.

The Islamic Action Front (IAF) is now facing the dilemma of whether to abide by the Muslim Brotherhood's decision or participate in the elections. Being the Muslim Brotherhood's political arm, the IAF has so far faithfully conformed to the Brotherhood's political guidelines, though maintaining a symbolic financial and administrative independence. A Muslim Brotherhood leader, however, said, under the condition of anonymity, that "it is likely that some members of the front will run independently."

"We, as an independent body, will study the Muslim Brotherhood's decision, and our Shura Council (the guidance committee in Islamic bodies) will take its decision," IAF senator and Executive Committee member Abdul Latif Arabiyat told the Jordan Times.

He also said that the IAF political office is scheduled to meet today to "study the alternatives thoroughly and discuss them democratically," and added that the front's Shura Council is expected to meet Saturday for a final decision on whether to follow the Muslim Brotherhood's guideline and boycott the elections.

As for the question of IAF Secretary General Isma'el Farhan's resignation, deemed as very likely by some observers and political reporters, Dr. Arabiyat excluded such possibility and stressed that "the IAF will take collective and not individual actions."

However, collective decisions do not seem easy, and divisions between the IAF ranks started becoming apparent yesterday, when IAF spokesperson Hamzeh Mansour reportedly expressed disapproval of the Muslim Brotherhood's decision and stated that "the IAF will participate in the elections, regardless."

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Dr. Mansour said "the boycott is against the interest of the Jordanian people and the development of democratic life (in the Kingdom)."

The Muslim Brotherhood's decision has affected the future policies of other opposition parties, that have scheduled council meetings over the weekend to evaluate the possibility of following the Islamists' example and boycotting the elections.

Jordan's Communist Party's Secretary General Yacoub Zayyaddin said he was "stunned" by the Brotherhood's communiqué.

"Now, we are studying the matter and we will make a final decision within days," Deputy Khalil Haddadin, president of the Jordanian Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party told the Jordan Times.

"We are not going to boycott the elections automatically, because the Muslim Brotherhood decided so, but we are considering the situation and studying it," said a source from the Jordanian Unionist Democratic Party (JUDP).

Meanwhile, the government maintained that election plans will not be affected by the decision.

"Our position is clear, and we have reiterated it many times: elections will be held on their constitutional time," said Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi.



Abdul-Majid Al-Thuneibat, the head of the Muslim Brotherhood, answers a journalist's question during an interview on Wednesday (Reuters photo)

"The government is sorry that the Muslim Brotherhood took the decision to boycott the elections," he added, "and we wish that all political colours were going to take part in the parliamentary elections."

However, the minister added, "they (the Muslim Brothers) are free to take the decision they consider most suitable for them."

Echoing Dr. Mutawi, Minister of Interior Nathir Rashid said, "the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood knows better than anyone else what is best for the movement, and must have studied the matter very carefully before making the decision to boycott the parliamentary elections."

Maintaining that "they made their own choice and, as such, we cannot do anything but respect it, as we respect the group (the Muslim Brotherhood) and its history," Mr. Rashid stressed that "we (the government) have not interfered and will not interfere in Muslim Brotherhood's affairs, nor affect their decision."

In a statement early morning yesterday, after Muslim Brotherhood's general supervisor Abdul Majeed Thuneibat signed the official communiqué announcing the boycott, a Brotherhood leader cited the fact that "the government rules alone and takes important decisions against the people's aspirations," as the main reason behind the decision.

"The executive power has been single-handed in its rule since mid-1995 ... and especially after it signed a peace treaty with Israel with no political gains," said the leader, who requested anonymity.

"The political game in Jordan is no longer useful," he added.

The leader also described the one-person, one-vote system as "eliminating the parties' chances to achieve parliamentary majority," and charged that the newly introduced amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law of "banning information and killing the truth."

U.N. turns down Iraqi draft on food distribution plan

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The United Nations Wednesday turned down a draft from Baghdad on a new distribution plan for the oil-for-food accord which aims to ease the hardships of the sanctions-hit Iraqi people.

"I received yesterday a preliminary draft of the distribution plan prepared by the government of Iraq," said Staffan de Mistura, U.N. coordinator for humanitarian affairs in Iraq.

"It is a good step in the right direction, but it does lack some details on important sectors," he said. "Therefore we need further discussion before its submission to the secretary general."

Oil Minister Amer Rashid said on June 24 that Iraq would resume limited oil exports around seven to 10 days after the new distribution plan is sealed with the United Nations.

The embargo imposed on Iraq for its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait was eased in December under the U.N. oil-for-food deal which allows Baghdad to export \$2 billion of oil every six months to buy food and medicines.

The accord was renewed at the start of June, but the crude exports are suspended until the distribution plan is drawn up for the second term.

On Saturday, the United Nations said that its part of the plan, for the distribution of food and medical supplies in the Kurdish-held north, has been ready since June 21.

It is waiting for Baghdad to do the same for the centre and south of Iraq.

Baghdad protests that it has been selling oil without receiving the goods in exchange.

Algerians evacuated before car bomb blast

ALGIERS (AFP) — Security forces averted a blood bath when they managed to evacuate residents in a busy part of Mascara, in western Algeria before a booby-trapped car blew up, Algerian press reported Wednesday.

The powerful blast early Tuesday caused considerable damage in central Mascara but no one was hurt, the papers said. The car was parked close to the central police station and a building inhabited by police officers.

"Emir Khaled Square was a pitiful sight: smoke, shattered windows, scattered debris. Several shops were seriously damaged," the daily Le Matin reported.

In a separate development, the daily Al Khabar reported that the bodies of six armed Islamists had been found Tuesday buried in a forest in the Mascara region. The men, buried a week ago, were killed in a police operation, it said.

Furthermore, the daily Authentique reported that

Rachid Oulmane, a "dangerous terrorist" specialised in the fabrication of explosives, was shot down Sunday near Bordj Menaiel, east of Algiers.

Another paper, La Tribune, said "an undetermined number of terrorists" were killed Monday by security forces in the Larbaa region, south of Algiers.

Larbaa inhabitants identified one body as that of a man responsible for the recent massacre in their town of a family of four and abduction of six girls, the paper said.

More than 200 people have been killed in massacres attributed to Muslim extremists since June 5 elections in which allies of President Liamine Zerroul won the most seats in the National Assembly.

Altogether more than 60,000 have died violently in Algeria in the five years since the military blocked a victory at the polls by the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS).

Another Jordanian publication folds

AMMAN (AFP) — The Jordanian newspaper Al Mithaq announced Wednesday it will cease publication because of restrictions under the new press law, whose promulgation in mid-May triggered a wave of union protests.

Al Mithaq is the second publication in less than a month to go belly up after the satirical Abed Rabbo, another weekly, folded June 14.

The new law gave press companies three months to massively boost their capital, a restriction journalists said

would result in the disappearance of most of the country's 12 weeklies.

Under the law, weekly publications must have at least JD300,000 in capital, a huge rise from the previous minimum of JD50,000.

Daily newspapers must now have a minimum capital of JD600,000 instead of the former JD50,000.

The new law also stiffened sanctions for press crimes such as treason, defamation and "attacks on national unity and public morale."

One more Ciller aide defects to Yilmaz's bloc in Turkey

ANKARA (AFP) — A former close aide to conservative politician Tansu Ciller on Wednesday defected from her True Path Party to Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's rival bloc, the Anatolian news agency said.

Hasan Peker, a former deputy leader of True Path, became the 38th deputy to resign from Ms. Ciller's party since the December 1995 general elections.

Mr. Peker said he would support Mr. Yilmaz' government in a parliamentary confidence vote on Saturday, according to Anatolian. In the meantime he would remain independent.

With Mr. Peker's support, Mr. Yilmaz now is backed by a clear majority of 281 deputies in the 550-seat parliament.

Mr. Peker also became the 14th deputy to defect from Ms. Ciller's party since Mr. Yilmaz was asked by President Suleyman Demirel to form a new government on June 20.

Mr. Yilmaz replaced Islamist Necmettin Erbakan. Ms. Ciller's political ally, who stepped down as prime minister on June 18, ending a turbulent 12-month term which included serious rifts with Turkey's pro-secular military.



The first flight of Kuwait Airways to Amman since the start of the Gulf war in 1991 lands at Queen Alia International Airport, Wednesday (see story on page 3) (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)

Israeli cabinet approved by Knesset, ends 3 weeks of coalition bickering

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli parliament Wednesday approved Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's revamped cabinet, ending three weeks of bickering that has paralysed his unwieldy right-wing coalition.

A total of 52 deputies in the 120-seat Knesset voted in favour of Mr. Netanyahu's appointments, which see two new ministers enter the cabinet, while 46 voted against and the remaining 22 were absent.

The vote clears the way for independent lawyer Yaakov Neeman to take over as finance minister and Michael Eitan to become science minister.

In addition Silwan Shalom is appointed to the new post of deputy defence minister, but he will swap jobs with fellow Likud Party Deputy Eitan after a year.

The prime minister presented his choices from the Knesset's podium, but made no comment about the changes which required a series of back-room deals to satisfy the competing demands of his seven coalition partners.

In the course of a brief debate that followed, extreme right-wing Deputy Rehavam Zeevi was expelled from the chamber after comparing Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler.

The cabinet changes were provoked by the resignation on June 18 of former Finance Minister Dan Meridor, who was forced out of the cabinet by Mr. Netanyahu over a policy dispute.

The science minister's job has remained vacant since Likud rightwinger Benny Begin walked out of the cabinet in disgust at the deal giving limited Palestinian self-rule to most of the West Bank city of Hebron in January.

Mr. Netanyahu created the deputy defence minister's job as part of a series of manoeuvres to pacify the demands of members of his Likud Party, who felt they were being squeezed out of jobs by Mr. Netanyahu's deal with coalition partners.

The cabinet changes were finalised Monday after an agreement between the premier and Foreign Minister David Levy ending a simmering row between the men, with the foreign minister upset that he was being excluded from crucial foreign policy decisions.

Mr. Levy will now have to give approval to the participation of other ministers and officials in the various negotiations with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

The agreement stresses that Mr. Levy gets the top role in negotiations and



Yaakov Neeman (right), newly appointed Israeli Finance Minister, is sworn in at the Knesset Wednesday (AFP photo)

Yitzhak Moicho, the prime minister's envoy to the talks, must meet with both leaders before and after each meeting with a Palestinian leader.

In addition, Mr. Netanyahu agreed to dissolve his "inner cabinet" that dealt with security issues and the peace process.

The surprise appointment of Mr. Neeman, an observant Jew close to settlers and the religious right-

wing, has left Likud hard-liner Ariel Sharon out in the cold.

The national infrastructure minister had been offered the finance post three weeks ago, only to have it yanked out of his grasp at the last minute.

Sources close to Mr. Sharon say he is plotting revenge for what he considers "an ugly trick," although the hawkish ex-general voted to approve the reshuffled cabinet.

Rabbis donate a copy of Koran to Hebron school

HEBRON (AFP) — Two Jewish rabbis on Wednesday presented a copy of the Koran to the Hebron girls' school where five copies of the Muslim holy book were found torn and spattered with paint.

Arik Ascherman and Jeremy Milgrom, of the Rabbis for Human Rights Group, gave the book to Hafira Aybedu, the headmistress of the Yakubia School where the desecrated copies of the Koran were found over the weekend following a raid by the Israeli army.

"We present this Koran in the hope that students at the Yakubia School will continue to derive inspiration for

peace, human rights and tolerance for their holy book," said a rabbi for human rights statement.

"The majority of Jews ... reject these attempts to turn political conflicts between Palestinians and Israelis into religious war," it added.

During their visit to the school with an official from the Palestinian education ministry, the rabbis called on the Israeli army to open an inquiry to find out who was responsible for the attack.

The headmistress has pinned the blame for the incident on either the army or Jewish settlers in the city. An army spokesman

admitted soldiers raided the school, but firmly denied they were responsible for the defaced Korans or damage to tables and chairs in the school.

A spokesman for the 400 militant Jewish settlers living in enclaves in the divided West Bank city also denied responsibility for the vandalism.

The discovery of the defaced Korans came just a week after a Jewish extremist plastered posters depicting the Prophet Muhammad as a pig on Arab shops in Hebron, infuriating the Muslim World.

Israel using Lebanese prisoners as bargaining chips

AMMAN (J.T.) — In a report sent to Jordan Times Wednesday, Amnesty International reported that Israel was holding scores of Lebanese nationals in custody and was using them as "bargaining chips."

"Those (Lebanese) captured and held in Israel and south Lebanon are being held as hostages by the state of Israel to be used as bargaining chips with Islamist militia groups," it detailed the cases of 21 Lebanese, some of whom have been held for more than 12 years without charge or trial. "Laws such as Israel's Emergency Powers (Detention) Law, which allow people to be detained for years after the expiry of their sentences or without trial, violate their fundamental human rights," Amnesty International said replying to the Israeli declaration that detainees were 'terrorists' and were being held 'according to the law.' According to Amnesty International, Israeli government has more than once linked the release of detainees with the release of, or accounting for Israeli soldiers missing in action in Lebanon.

5 prisoners die in Turk jail riot — officials

ANKARA (AFP) — Five inmates choked to death and another five were injured in a fire set off during a night of rioting in an Istanbul prison, the Turkish authorities announced after police stormed the building Wednesday.

Turkish NTV Television earlier reported that eight people died and 11 were injured after rioters set fire to their beds and sheets in the city's Metris Jail to protest against poor conditions.

Declaring that "there was nothing political about the rioting," Justice Minister Oltan Sungurur said the riot "was due to tensions stemming from the murder of one inmate by other prisoners Tuesday."

The dead man had been killed with a skewer, said Mr. Sungurur, adding that "the situation is under control ... calm has been restored since the forces of order entered the jail."

Mr. Sungurur said that two of the injured prisoners had received first aid and did not require hospital treatment. Three others were out of danger.



QATAR BREAKS THE ICE: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday (right) greets late Tuesday in Baghdad Sheikh Jassim Bin Khalifa Al-Thani of Qatar, who came with a delegation to extend his greetings on the recovery of Uday from the wounds he sustained in the attempt on his life in December 1996 (AFP photo)

Sudanese official in Kuwait, first since Gulf war

KUWAIT (AP) — Sudan's junior foreign minister has arrived in Kuwait, the first senior Sudanese official to visit the emirate since the Gulf crisis caused a rift between the two countries.

Sudan's State Minister for Foreign Affairs Mustafa Osman Ismail arrived late Tuesday with a letter from President Omar al-Bashir to the emir, Sheikh Jaber Ahmed Sabah, the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) said.

It did not report the contents of the letter. KUNA quoted Mr. Ismail as saying that Sudan condemns Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait and supports Kuwait's sovereignty.

During the Gulf crisis, Kuwait had believed that Sudan, Jordan and Yemen tilted toward Iraq because they refused to join a U.S.-led coalition that eventually evicted Iraq in February 1991.

The three countries say they stayed away from the coalition because they favoured an Arab solution.

The oil-rich Kuwait started to mend fences

with these countries in an effort to further isolate the Iraqi regime, already struggling under crippling U.N. sanctions.

The Sudanese embassy here has been closed since the crisis, and Mr. Ismail told KUNA that Sudan was keen on resuming full diplomatic and commercial ties with Kuwait.

Kuwait's diplomatic mission in Sudan remained open all these years, but it was headed by a charge d'affaires.

Kuwait's foreign minister, Sheikh Sabah Ahmed Sabah, has been pushing for reconciliation for years. Many Kuwaitis, however, say they still cannot forgive Arabs who did not fully support them.

For the first time since the war, Kuwait Airways resumed flights to Jordan Wednesday. Royal Jordanian will also resume flights to Kuwait Thursday. The Jordanian embassy, however, remains closed.

NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S.-gifted frigate docks at new home — Bahrain

MINA SALMAN (AP) — A former U.S. Navy frigate gifted to Bahrain last year arrived here Wednesday to serve as the island-nation's first warship. With the 3,500-tonne Sabha, formerly USS Jack Williams, in hand, Bahrain is now the first Gulf country to own a frigate, said Betty Rowe, country programme manager at the U.S. Department of the Navy. Bahrain, a close ally of the United States, is home to a key U.S. naval base in the region. Although the \$200 million warship was a gift, Bahrain paid around \$50 million for maintenance and upgrading the ship's combat capabilities, said Ms. Rowe. The amount also included the payment for training the frigate's 240-member crew in the United States, she said. The ship was handed over to Bahrain on September 13, 1996, and set sail from the port of Charleston in May, covering a distance of 17,792 kilometres before arriving here. En route, the vessel called on ports in Bermuda, the Azores, Britain, France, Italy, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Daily News newspaper reported.

Sudanese woman gives birth to quadruplets in UAE

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A Sudanese woman living in the United Arab Emirates has given birth to quadruplets, all of whom are in good health, doctors said Wednesday. The 25-year-old woman gave birth to two boys and two girls by caesarean section at the Abu Dhabi Corniche Hospital Monday. "They are healthy and in good shape. Their mother is also doing well," a doctor said, adding that the babies weighed between 1.5 and two kilograms each. The woman, who has a three-year-old daughter, underwent fertility treatment to have a second child.

Strike paralyses Yemen's airports

SANAA (AFP) — Thousands of workers at Yemen's airports launched a three-day strike Wednesday to demand higher salaries, bringing air traffic to a standstill. The ground and service staff launched the protest after failing to secure a pay rise of 30 per cent. The strike caused the cancellation of around 20 flights out of Sanaa and Aden, the southern capital, Wednesday. Their union, putting the number of strikers at 4,000, said airlines flying to Yemen had been warned of the action, which is due to last until Saturday unless the demands are met. In June, pilots and engineers of the carrier Yemenia won their pay demands after a similar strike.

Mother tries to sell baby for \$30

CAIRO (AFP) — A tearful mother offered her unwanted 40-day-old baby to a passer-by in central Cairo for 100 Egyptian pounds (\$30) because the father refused to acknowledge him, a news report said Wednesday. The female passer-by agreed to take the baby for free, the government newspaper Al-Ahram said. The "new mother" went to the police station to fill out an adoption statement, but the police refused and she went to search for the birth mother. The real mother told police the baby was the result of an illicit relationship with a chauffeur who refused to acknowledge the child. Brought before prosecutors for negligence, the mother insisted on giving up her child, and the prosecutors put the baby in a home.

Egypt blocks entry of Israeli insecticide

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian airport authorities have refused to allow into the country 450 kilograms of Israeli insecticides which have been blocked in customs for a year. Salah Eddin Sayed, who owns an import-export company, imported the insecticide in 1996 but the Egyptian Agriculture Ministry refused to allow its sale here, citing "its harmful effect," an airport official said. The cargo has since been held at Cairo airport. A few days ago, the businessman submitted to authorities a falsified document containing Agriculture Ministry "approval" for the same material as "fertiliser," in an attempt to get it out, the official said. But officials saw through his plot and he was arrested and ordered to appear before court.

U.S. tourist fatally poisoned in Turkey

ANKARA (AFP) — Three U.S. tourists have been poisoned, one fatally, by four other foreigners who robbed them at a popular Turkish holiday resort, the Turkish Press said on Wednesday. Three Tunisian men and a Romanian woman, who met the American men in a hotel in Egridir in southwestern Turkey, poisoned them as they drank together on Monday night, the newspapers said. One of the Americans, aged 59, died while the two others were hospitalised as the robbers fled with the money and belongings of their victims.

Hotel owner's death may be linked to Israeli organised crime — police

FORT LAUDERDALE (AP) — Detectives investigating the assassination of a hotel owner are looking for connections to Israeli organised crime after an informant claimed Israeli underworld members may have wanted the owner dead.

Zvika Yuz was pulled into his Ramada Sea Club ocean resort in May when he was gunned down by a killer wearing a fake beard and carrying a doll.

The slaying has yet to be solved but has exposed a web of connections that lead to the crime underworld in Israel. Yuz had business ties to many on a famous list of 11 top Israeli organised crime figures, the Miami Herald reported Monday.

Yuz had predicted he would be killed on the orders of "one of the most dangerous men in the whole east of the United States," a federal informant told the newspaper.

Fort Lauderdale Police haven't identified any suspects but investigators have

dozens of leads still to explore.

"Anything the guy was involved with could be connected to the case," Clinton Ward, a Fort Lauderdale police spokesman, said Monday. "There's still a world of possibilities."

Among the leads detectives are pursuing: a possible connection to a Yuz associate found dead last month in Georgia.

Isaac Benarroch, 64, was being sought for questioning in Yuz's murder because of some threatening letters he sent Yuz four years ago.

Benarroch was among the 1,600 investors who lost \$300 million in what federal authorities have called one of the largest fraud schemes in Florida history — premium sales corp.

The business failed in 1993. Yuz, who was never charged, had collected \$22 million in investments from influential Israeli figures who wanted their money back.

Meanwhile, Benarroch's

partner in a Venezuela tennis club, Ricardo La Begera, was also shot execution-style in West Palm Beach in February. Neither of the killings has been solved.

Among those linked to the Israeli most-wanted list of 11: Eli Tisona, now in the federal lockup in Miami awaiting trial on money-laundering charges; and Ilan Kasht, 61, an Israeli jeweller in Miami who has already pleaded guilty to his role in laundering millions for the Cali drug cartel. Kasht has turned government informant in exchange for the possibility of a reduced sentence.

He says the Israeli syndicate's Florida operation centres on Tisona and says Yuz was standing in the way of the sale of the Ramada Sea Club ocean resort. Yuz had a 12.5 per cent, \$100,000 interest in the Ramada Hotel where he was killed, and was also its manager.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:35 — French Programmes
16:05 — Curiosity Show
16:30 — They Came From Outer Space
17:15 — Varieties
18:10 — French Programmes
19:00 — News in French
19:30 — News Headline
19:35 — Parenthood
20:00 — World Echo
20:30 — Documentary
21:10 — Kung Fu
22:00 — News in English
22:30 — Feature film
23:59 — Tarantula

PRAYER TIMES

03:59 — Fajr
05:32 — Sunrise
12:41 — Dhuhr
16:22 — Asr
19:49 — Maghrib
21:23 — Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweith, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 5516245
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

Mini/Max. Temperatures
Amman 19/29
Aqaba 24/36
Deserts 16/32
Jordan Valley 23/36

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 31. Aqaba 37 Humidity readings: Amman 50 per cent. Aqaba 31 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
ANMAN:
Dr. Mikhael Halesh 5519220
Dr. Fadi Al Khateb 865456
Dr. Youssef Al Faghi 780104
Dr. Rami Sakhar 856157
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdous pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 637055
Nakrouh pharmacy 623672
Al Salama pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh 250080
Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Fahd Jaber 984549
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology:
Temperatures are expected to drop becoming slightly below average with winds northwesterly moderate to active. In Aqaba moderate and occasionally dusty weather conditions will prevail, winds northerly moderate to active and seas calm.

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 6371111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381

RJ Flight Information

08:5300
Queen Alia Int'l. Airport 08:5300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity 644281/6
Akhlel Maternity 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Madhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Munasher Hospital 66727/79
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Munasher 777101/3
Al-Bashir 773111/26
Army, Marita 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

IBN SINN Hospital

(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272775
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital (02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or 08 (53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
10:00 — Sanaa (RJ)
10:05 — Dibran, Riyadh (RJ)
10:20 — Bahrain (RJ)
10:25 — Beirut (RJ)

Other Flights

04:05 — Riyadh (add) (SV)
13:00 — Riyadh (add) (SV)
13:55 — Doha (GF)
14:40 — Sharjah (AH)
14:55 — Doha (add) (Q7)
16:00 — Rome (AZ)
19:50 — Tel Aviv (LY)
21:00 — Cairo (MS)
21:10 — Beirut (ME)
01:20 — Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)
05:00 — London (BA)
09:00 — Dubai (EK)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:45 — Beirut (RJ)
09:10 — Kuwait (RJ)
11:50 — Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
12:00 — Moscow (RU)
12:15 — Amsterdam, Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
12:30 — Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:40 — Riyadh (add) (RJ)
13:00 — Doha (RJ)
13:10 — Paris (RJ)
13:25 — London (RJ)
17:15 — Athens (OA)
19:00 — Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
21:25 — Jeddah (RJ)
22:00 — Abu Dhabi, Doha (RJ)
22:25 — Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
22:45 — Cairo (RJ)
23:15 — Jeddah (add) (RJ)
00:30 — Laraca (RJ)
04:30 — Dhahran (add) (RJ)
04:00 — Athens (OA)
05:05 — Riyadh (add) (SV)
06:15 — Istanbul (TK)
08:45 — Beirut (ME)
08:50 — Amsterdam (GA)
09:10 — London (BA)
14:30 — Riyadh (SV)
14:45 — Bahrain, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:30 — Annaba (Algeria) (AH)
15:55 — Moscow (add) (Q7)
17:00 — Rome (AZ)
21:10 — Tel Aviv (LY)
22:00 — Cairo (MS)
02:30 — Amsterdam (KL)
06:45 — Beirut (ME)
10:00 — Dubai (EK)
10:25 — London (BA)



HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Wednesday visits the Prime Minister and other officials on the outcome of recent visits to Turkey, the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Hungary (Petra photo)

Regent, prime minister discuss outcomes of official visits

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Wednesday visited the Prime Minister and other officials on the outcome of recent visits to Turkey, the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Hungary.

The Regent, who returned to Amman Tuesday evening, described the political and economic topics, which he discussed with these countries' government leaders.

Upon his return to Amman, Prince Hassan described these talks as "positive" and stated that businesspersons with whom he met asserted their willingness to invest in the Kingdom.

Dr. Majali outlined the outcome of his own visits

to the United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Bahrain and Egypt, which, he said, strengthened the Kingdom's relations with those countries.

The talks demonstrated that views between Jordan and the Arab countries at the pan-Arab, regional and international levels are identical, according to the prime minister.

Dr. Majali also detailed the recent Jordanian-Egyptian Higher Committee meeting in Cairo, describing it as further enhancing the two countries' coordination in various matters.

The prime minister then presented his government's plans for the development and modernisation of economic legislation, emphasising matters con-

nected with investment and attracting foreign capital for Jordanian projects.

Attending the meeting were Minister of Foreign Affairs Fayez Tarawneh, Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf and Minister of Industry, Trade, and Supply Hani Mulki.

Also Wednesday, Dr. Majali visited the Orphans Fund where Director Mohammad Kreishan outlined the fund's activities and its drive to invest funds belonging to orphaned children in various income-generating projects.

Dr. Majali asserted that the fund's activities and investments can help the government partly redress unemployment as the fund's projects will employ Jordanians.

Kuwaiti commercial flight lands in Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — The first Kuwaiti commercial flight in seven years Wednesday landed at Queen Alia International Airport in Amman.

The 170 passengers aboard the Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) Airbus 320 flight were welcomed by Civil Aviation Director General Jaser Ziyad as well as Kuwaiti diplomats and other government officials.

Attendees distributed flowers and sweets to the passengers in the airport's VIP lounge where a brief celebration was held.

Chargé d'Affaires at the Kuwaiti embassy in Amman, Faisal Mukheisim described the resumption of KAC flights to Amman as a good indication of future close relations between Jordan and Kuwait and their citizens.

"Our links with Jordan have a long history," he said.

Mr. Mukheisim predicted that the semi-weekly flights will increase in number in the future.

Agreement between KAC and Royal Jordanian (RJ) to resume flights between Amman and Kuwait was reached last month during a visit to Jordan by KAC Chairman and Managing Director Ahmad Mishari.

KAC will fly to Amman every Wednesday and Friday starting July 9, he said.

According to the agreement, RJ will fly to Kuwait every Monday and Thursday.

Kuwait froze ties with Jordan, including the suspension of direct flights to the Kingdom, after accusing Amman of supporting Iraq during the latter's seven-month occupation of the emirate between August 1990 and February 1991.

At the height of the crisis, Kuwait reportedly

dismissed more than 320,000 Jordanians from their jobs, closed the Jordanian embassy and recalled its ambassador from Amman.

RJ Vice President for Public Relations Munib Toukan detailed the semi-weekly flights arrangement as temporary — pending a study and re-evaluation of the volume of air transport between the two countries.

At the ceremony, Mr. Ziyad expressed optimism that the number of flights would increase in the future.

Previous to 1990, 13 per cent of the total volume of air traffic at the Queen Alia International Airport was reserved for the Amman-Kuwait City route.

Relations between Kuwait and Jordan have been improving, although full diplomatic ties are yet to be restored.

Supreme Court chief justice resigns

AMMAN (J.T.) — Supreme Court Chief Justice Omar Abaza has resigned his post after 38 years in the judiciary due to "circumstances" which have "forced me to take this decision."

In interviews with the Jordan Times and Al Arab Al Yawm newspapers, Mr. Abaza stated that certain circumstances "have forced my realisation that this is the right time for retiring so as to keep my conscience clear."

"I have decided to retire so as not to serve as a tool

in other people's hands and sign blank papers," he stated.

Al Arab Al Yawm also quoted Justice Abaza as attributing his resignation to differences with Head of the Judicial Council and presiding Court of Appeal Justice Naji Tarawneh.

Judicial sources stated that a lack of coordination between the two men may have prompted Justice Abaza to submit his resignation to Minister of Justice Riyad Sbakra.

Justice Abaza told the Jordan Times that he

intends to disclose further reasons for his resignation "at the right moment."

He affirmed plans to write books related to law and might continue to practise same.

Justice Abaza, 66, served in various courts in Amman and other cities and also served as chief attorney general for the Kingdom during his 38 year tenure.

According to Al Rai Arabic daily Wednesday, the judicial council resolved to retire another judge, Alaudin Zueiter. No reasons were given for the decision.

Two arrested on suspicion of murder

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Police Wednesday announced the arrest of two suspects in connection with the murder of a 55-year-old woman, who was found strangled in her house Tuesday in the Shmeisani neighbourhood of Amman, official sources said.

The victim, Fakhrieh Kurdi, whose body was found at approximately 3:00 p.m. by her daughters, was bound by her arms and legs.

An official source identified the two suspects as Rasba H., 25, and her 30-year-old sister, Abeer, the latter of whom was Ms. Kurdi's housekeeper.

According to the source, the two women confessed in front of Criminal Prosecutor Muhammad Bisbtawi and retracted their crimes.

The suspects planned to kill Ms. Kurdi because she fired

"The two women went to the victim's house, pinned her to the ground, tied her up, strangled her, took her jewellery and fled," according to the official.

He added that both women were apprehended on a ship that was leaving Aqaba for Egypt.

"The two women were apparently attempting to flee the country as Abeer is married to an Egyptian," the source said.

Officer receives prison term of 15 years

Meanwhile, the Police Court Wednesday sentenced a 28-year-old police officer to 15 years imprisonment after he was declared guilty of killing a student in the Yajouz forest in November 1996.

The court, led by Justice Colonel Abdul Ruhman Kharabsheh, found Officer Mohammad S. guilty of shooting and killing 18-year-old Scheima Mohammad in the forest on Nov. 4.

According to court documents, the defendant, who was wearing civil clothes, was in the forest with his friends and noticed a car parked in a deserted area with a man and a woman inside.

The defendant approached the car and asked the two to descend, but instead the victim's friend started the car and beaded away, transcripts stated.

The defendant drew his gun and shot at the car, striking Ms. Mohammad in the head and killing her instantly.

Egyptian professors win King Abdullah award

AMMAN (Petra) — President of the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilisation Research, Al al Bayt Foundation Nasser Eddin Assad Wednesday announced the names of the recipients of the King Abdullah International Award for 1997 in social and humanitarian sciences.

Both winners are Egyptian professors.

Professor Abdul Fattah Mustafa Ghanimeh, head of the philosophy department at Manshiya University, was honoured for his book "Approaches to Islamic civilisation and its effects on European thought."

Professor Mohammad Omarah Mustafa Omarah was also honoured for his study "Islam and pluralism."

Each of the two winners received \$10,000. A joint committee of judges was formed by the Al al Bayt Foundation and Dorn University in England.

Noisy boars trigger gunfire at border

AMMAN (AFP) — Jordanian soldiers opened fire at the country's border with Israel after spotting "suspicious activity," only to discover that the culprits were noisy wild boars, officials said Wednesday.

"The Jordanian Army fired several shots following suspicious movements in Al Zor" in the Jordan Valley Tuesday evening "but it turned out that the movements came from

some wild boars," said Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi.

The carcasses of several boars were later discovered during a search of the region by the Jordanian Army, he added.

In Jerusalem, the Israeli army affirmed that it has closed Allenby Bridge linking Jordan for four hours Tuesday evening after hearing shots from the Jordanian side.



HRH Prince Ra'd Wednesday honours Samer Ahmad Salameh, a university graduate who has been working in an Amman restaurant since graduation. Prince Ra'd paid tribute to Mr. Salameh's move to surpass a "culture of shame" and accept gainful employment in order to aid his family (Petra photo)

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

"Dali" (with commentary in Arabic by Adnan Al Shami) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday at 6:00 p.m.

"Honey I Shrunk the Kids" at the American Center, Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

Photo exhibition entitled "Jerusalem in Danger" by Khalid Al Zaghari at the Modern Educational School, Khaldiya, until July 31.

Photography exhibition by Jan Kassay, at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until July 29.

Paintings by Ali Al Ghoul at Greater Amman Municipality Cultural Department, Ras Al Ain, until July 31.

"Silver Jewelry exhibition" at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Nour Al Hussein Foundation, until July 26.

Paintings by contemporary Iraqi artists entitled "Ecology and Environment in Iraqi Art" at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, until July 12 (except Tuesdays).

"Contemporary Arab Artists Exhibition" showing works of 60 Arab artists, at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until July 24.

NEWS IN BRIEF

GAM donates to blood bank

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Council of the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) Wednesday approved the donation of JD 10,000 to the city's blood bank as well as JD 10,000 to the Young Women's Muslim Association (YWMA).

Minister plans conference

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Social Development Mohammad Khair Mamsar Wednesday met with Head of the Voluntary Societies Union in Amman Anwar Hadid and the two discussed an upcoming national conference which the ministry is slated to hold soon. The conference will focus on the duties and performance of voluntary societies in Jordan.

By Tanya Habjouqa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A Japanese humanitarian society delivered desperately needed medical aid to suffering Iraqi children last week. Iraqi Medical Aid for Children (IMA) Representative Itsuko Hirata said Wednesday.

"Iraqi children are dying from malnutrition and curable diseases — their [situations] are so severe," Ms. Hirata, a prominent journalist, told the Jordan Times.

IMA members completed their first mission, delivering 25 tonnes of medical supplies to three children's hospitals in Iraq.

"The situation is horrible," Ms. Hirata asserted. "You have empty hospital beds and overcrowded waiting rooms full of sick children."

Ms. Hirata cited one Iraqi paediatrician who stated that a young boy died in the waiting room after waiting two months for leukaemia treatment.

"The doctors are frustrated, there is nothing they can do," she said.

Iraqis have been devastated by seven years of U.N.-imposed economic sanctions imposed on the country following its invasion and subsequent occupation of Kuwait in 1990.

The U.N. Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) has reported that 12 per cent of infants in Baghdad die, 28 per cent have stunted growth and 29 per cent are underweight.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has reported that deaths related to diarrhoeal disease have tripled. The government of Iraq has reported that more than 500,000 children have died since the imposition of the sanctions, the majority under five years of age, and most from curable diseases.

"I do not like Saddam's [Hussein] regime, but the torturing of innocent children must end," Ms. Hirata stressed.

The medical supplies were originally intended for victims of the 1995 Hyogo earthquake, and the supplies were nearing their expiration date.

As a freelance journalist who has covered the Middle East, Ms. Hirata had first-hand knowledge of the deplorable conditions in Iraq.

After an initial refusal, Ms. Hirata began an extensive media campaign, and presented her own one-hour documentary on people's suffering in Iraq.

In December of 1996, the Hyogo prefecture agreed to donate the supplies, provided that the medicine would be dispersed amongst children, that a society be formed to execute the project, and that such an endeavour procure U.N. Security Council approval.

In February of 1997, Ms. Hirata founded IMA with six other members, and began collecting donations from over 1,000 concerned Japanese citizens.



Iraq Medical Aid for Children, a Japanese humanitarian society, poses by shipment of medical aid en route to children in Iraq

first such permit granted by the council, she said.

IMA dispersed the supplies to the Baghdad Central Children's Hospital, Basra Children's Hospital and the Mosul Children's Hospital.

"When I returned to the Baghdad Central Children's Hospital to check on the supplies, the doctors and nurses were labelling the medicine," she maintained that she was appalled by the conditions the Iraqis were forced to live in, comparing Baghdad to a giant cesspool where

sewage and street children co-existed.

"Many children are forced to beg in the streets and their parents cannot afford to send them to school," Ms. Hirata asserted.

She said that the U.N. oil-for-food deal had supplied the Iraqis with a limited amount of food, and no medical supplies.

"The oil-for-food deal is completely misleading to the world, because it is not enough," Ms. Hirata told the Jordan Times.

She affirmed that chil-

dren are dying from malnutrition, and that no vaccinations are available to deter the increasing rate of disease.

Ms. Hirata voiced her belief that the sanctions would be lifted this coming November, as related by various U.N. workers whom she spoke to in Baghdad.

"I must now write [about that which I witnessed] for the Japanese public, and I hope that others will follow our activity and fight against this unnecessary suffering," she concluded.

NATO backs Plavsic in Bosnian Serb struggle

MADRID (R) — NATO leaders, voicing deep concern over an alleged anti-democratic climate and abuses of police power, strongly backed Bosnian Serb leader Biljana Plavsic Tuesday in her battle with Bosnian Serb hardliners.

"The democratic process is being distorted in order to block the constitutional decisions of the elected president of Republika Srpska which must be respected," they said in a statement issued at a NATO enlargement summit in Madrid.

The statement called on hardliners allied to indicted war criminal and ex-Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic to resolve their differences peacefully, warning they faced even greater isolation from the international community if not.

"We will not tolerate any recourse to force or violence, or the unauthorised deployment of military or paramilitary force," the statement warned.

Opponents of Mrs. Plavsic have scoffed at international

warnings they were flouting the law by refusing to accept a presidential decision to dissolve parliament, threatening the prospect of two rival governments in the Bosnian Serb Republic.

The United States and European governments say Mrs. Plavsic acted in line with the constitution last week when she dissolved the Bosnian Serb assembly and called new elections for Sept. 1.

The statement warned the hardliners they were acting in defiance of the Dayton Peace Accords, which a 35,000-strong NATO-led force is policing, and called on them to resolve their differences peacefully and through dialogue.

"We demand that police in Republika Srpska halt acts of intimidation and comply fully with all provisions of the peace agreement," the statement said.

NATO countries, which have been criticised for failing to take action to detain Mr. Karadzic, again called on the leaders of the region to fulfill their obligation to

hand over all indicted war criminals to the international tribunal in the Hague.

But the statement avoided any suggestion NATO leaders might be prepared to change the mission's mandate to go after Mr. Karadzic despite recent hints the United States and its allies were hardening their stance.

At a joint news conference in Madrid, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen were unforthcoming when asked whether the United States and its allies were prepared if necessary to send troops to arrest indicted war criminals.

But Mrs. Albright, who has been pushing Bosnian leaders for tougher action, said: "I think the point is... there is no statute of limitations on their crimes and their day will come."

"Now the issue is more 'can they afford not to act?'," one official said, adding both the United States and the Europeans were determined to pull out their forces as planned next summer.

"Time is running out to make the (Dayton) peace accords work and with Karadzic there they will not. That is the dilemma," the official said.

NATO leaders also agreed to order a study on ways to try to bring more stability to the turbulent Balkan area in general.

Analysts say NATO states, arguing that the alliance's eastwards expansion into Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, will extend stability, do not want to be accused of failing to have any policy for the continent's most unstable area.

Albania is in turmoil amid constant fears unrest could spread to the Serb province of Kosovo where ethnic Albanians heavily outnumber Serb Nationalists.

NATO officials said alliance Secretary-General Javier Solana had held urgent telephone talks with Carlos Westendorp, a fellow Spaniard and the international high representative to Bosnia, Tuesday morning.



Indian policemen look for clues inside the coach of a passenger train damaged in a bomb blast near the town of Lehakhanna in the northern Indian state of Punjab. At least 34 people were killed when the powerful bomb ripped through the passenger train (Reuters photo)

Indian police probe train blast; 34 killed

BHATINDA (AFP) — Indian police Wednesday were investigating a devastating bomb blast on a train that killed 34 people and injured nearly 70 in the northern state of Punjab.

Forensic experts were still combing the blast site, near this Punjab town, and the wreckage of train cars for clues and the identity of the explosive used in Tuesday's midday attack, officials said.

"Nothing concrete has turned up yet," a police officer said.

Thirty-four people died when a powerful bomb exploded in a crowded, fourth car of a train coming from Ganganagar town in the neighbouring desert state of Rajasthan to Ambala City in Punjab.

A railway spokesman said 18 survivors were still in critical condition and had been shifted to a hospital in the Punjab city of Ludhiana. Forty-five others were in hospitals here.

The deafening explosion, which was heard up to four kilometres away, however, did not damage the rail tracks. Train services resumed at the site after mid-

night Tuesday. No one claimed responsibility for the blast although immediate suspicion rested on Sikh militants, whose decade-old campaign for an independent state in Punjab was almost crushed in 1993 by the police and military.

Remnants of the militants are, however, still at large. The Times of India newspaper quoted unidentified investigators as blaming Muslim separatists from the adjoining state of Kashmir for the attack.

The train, which was entering a small station when the blast occurred, was a gory sight Tuesday strewn with charred and bloodied limbs and flesh. Many bodies were blackened.

The police admitted that the first to rush to the site for rescue work were hundreds of villagers who heard the explosion. Sikh temples in the area appealed to residents to help the wounded and donate blood.

People began taking the dead and injured to hospitals on tractors and Jeeps before the police took over. Some bus drivers ordered their passengers out to join in the relief effort.

"It was a terrible sight," said Gyan Singh, a railway employee.

The top of the carriage had blown off. Luggage was strewn far away across the track. There were bloody bodies inside the wreckage," Mr. Singh said.

Many frightened passengers jumped off the train and injured themselves.

Among the dead was a 39-year-old Hindu man, Lakshman, who was going to the holy Hindu town of Hardwar for the funeral of his grandfather. Twelve of his family members were injured.

It was the fourth bomb explosion in Punjab since a coalition of a Sikh political party and Hindu nationalists assumed office in February. No organisation has claimed responsibility for any of the blasts.

Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, a Punjabi, said he was horrified.

"It is an act of desperation by elements opposed to peace in the state," he said. Added Punjab Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal, a veteran Sikh politician: "It is a heinous crime. Violence has absolutely no place in our democratic set-up."

The Punjab police chief Wednesday alleged that Pakistani intelligence could have masterminded the train bomb blast, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported.

PTI quoted P.C. Dogra as saying the explosion could be the handwork of "agents of Pakistani intelligence."

He added Tuesday's blast might have been set off using a timer device.

Mr. Dogra gave no proof to back his allegation of Pakistani involvement.

New Delhi has previously accused Pakistan of arming and training Sikh militants in Punjab as well as Muslim separatists in the neighbouring state of Kashmir. Pakistan has denied both charges.

In New Delhi, meanwhile, Punjab's Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal urged the government "to make the Punjab a more secure place" and "to take steps to ensure that the Punjab is a more secure place."

The United Nations (UN) said Mr. Badal made the demand during a meeting with Home Minister Inderjit Singh. Mr. Badal also sent the same message to Gujral.

Kenyan authorities close University of Nairobi after student protests

NAIROBI (R) — Kenyan authorities Wednesday closed the University of Nairobi after students streamed into the city centre following a call for more protests by opposition groups demanding constitutional reforms.

"Despite the appeal for calm in the circular of 8th July and the address by the vice-chancellor, the situation has continued to deteriorate. The University of Nairobi (UON) will be closed with immediate effect," Vice-Chancellor Francis Gichaga said in a statement.

Hundreds of Kenyan students streamed into the city centre Wednesday in response to a call for more protests by opposition groups demanding constitutional reforms, witnesses said.

The Nairobi University demonstrators were apparently angered by a report in the independent daily Nation newspaper that four students had died of wounds in clashes with police during protests Monday.

If the daily Nation report is confirmed, it would bring the death toll from Monday's violence across Kenya to 13.

The students blocked the main highway through the Kenyan capital at the height of the morning rush hour. Riot police and elite paramilitary General Service Unit (GSU) personnel moved in to confront the students.

More police reinforcements headed for the main university campus close to State House, President Daniel Arap Moi's official residence, where a regional heads of state summit was taking place.

Nine people were killed in Kenya Monday during the most violent clashes between police and protesters since unrest in 1991 that helped push Mr. Moi to allow multi-party elections.

Opposition parties, human rights groups and other bodies under the umbrella National Convention Executive Committee

(NCEC) have called for protests Wednesday to press the government for constitutional reforms before elections.

The parties said they would demonstrate at State House to bring Kenya to the attention of visiting leaders from Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti who are discussing the conflict in Sudan.

"Kenya needs conflict management just like Sudan. As a country we don't have the moral authority to tell others how to manage conflict. We will demonstrate, go to where these leaders are meeting, and tell them these things," NCEC core convenor Kivutha Kibwana said Tuesday.

Kenyan officials ridiculed the opposition's ability to disrupt President Daniel Arap Moi's six-nation summit, which opened at State House Tuesday and closes Wednesday morning. They said they expected protest calls to go unheeded.

More than 100 Nairobi University students marched out of their campus late Tuesday and stoned cars in more than two hours of protest.

They blocked traffic on the main highway through Nairobi until about 70 riot and GSU police pushed them back, firing baton rounds and teargas.

Later, residents of Nairobi's exclusive Riverside Drive neighbourhood said they heard firing after students again broke out of their residences and police reservists blocked the road into the area. It was unclear what was happening.

London-based human rights group Amnesty International deplored Monday's police violence and said those responsible should be brought to justice.

"Excessive violence was clearly used in an attempt to intimidate pro-democracy activists from holding further rallies," Amnesty International said Tuesday, adding that constitutional reforms after elections would be meaningless.

Police deaths, abductions fuel tension in Chechnya

GROZNY (R) — Nine Russian police died when their vehicle was blown up near Chechnya Tuesday and a French aid organisation said one of its workers had been kidnapped, the third foreigner abducted in the area in a week.

Five Chechens were also seized Tuesday from a bus on its way to Chechnya from the Caucasus region of North Ossetia in what Chechnya's president called "a provocation... by forces trying to disrupt the building of an independent Chechen state."

The incidents raised tension in the region after a period of relative calm and an apparent improvement in relations between Chechnya's separatist leaders and Moscow, which fought a bloody military campaign against them in 1994-6.

A spokeswoman for Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said unknown kidnappers had taken Christophe Andre hostage from MSF headquarters in Nazran during the night of July 1 to July 2.

Nazran is the capital of Russia's North Caucasus region of Ingushetia which borders Chechnya, where two British aid workers were abducted last week. Many refugees from the Chechnya conflict, which killed tens of thousands, still live there.

"A guard at the headquarters, who had been tied up and knocked down by the kidnappers, alerted our workers, who lived in another building. Local police are investigating," she said. "Since then we have learnt absolutely nothing about him."

In Dagestan, which also borders Chechnya, a bomb went off Tuesday morning under a truck carrying 15 police assigned by Moscow to guard the frontier with the breakaway republic.

The Dagestan Interior Ministry said nine of them had died and the rest were injured, two seriously. The head of investigations at Dagestan's Federal Security Service (FSB) Colonel Babibul Zhabulayev said special teams had been set up.

"A criminal investigation has been launched into this terrorist act. Investigating groups made up of FSB, prosecutor and police officials have been set up," he told Reuters.

He said they had not yet established a motive. "Of course, it is most likely to be a consequence of the military operation in Chechnya," added the security official, without elaborating.

Vranitzky to carry on in Albania for OSCE

VIENNA (R) — Franz Vranitzky, head of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mission to Albania, said Tuesday he would continue his work for Europe's top security body in the Balkan state even after the withdrawal of a multinational security force next month.

The former Austrian chancellor told Reuters in an interview the OSCE's chairman in office, Danish Foreign Minister Niels Helveg Petersen, had asked him to stay on to coordinate the body's measures to restore a functioning economy and judiciary system.

The Balkan state has been riven by months of violence and bloodshed triggered by the collapse of shady investment funds.

An 11-nation Italian-led force of 7,000 troops was deployed in April to guard the distribution of aid and help secure free and fair elections in Europe's poorest country.

The ex-Communist Socialists won a landslide victory in the elections called to end the anarchy, but Albania

now needs financial help from the west to rebuild its shattered economy and ensure the violence does not resurface, Mr. Vranitzky said.

"I have suggested to Mr. Petersen that he might come up with a decision to set up a working group quickly to deal with the financial and economic reconstruction of Albania with the restoration of public order and with a good deal of support for the Albanians as far as security is concerned," Mr. Vranitzky said.

But how to best tackle Albania's problems was tricky. "Should it be only concentrating on setting up a police force? But then one could criticise that Albania is going to be a police state," he said in English.

"Should we only come up with financial support? But then many people would say we need security and safety before we put money into the country. It's a vicious circle," he added.

Therefore a package which incorporated the two was the logical solution, although it would be "very tough work."

Mr. Vranitzky stressed the importance of involving Albanians in negotiations as much as possible, for example with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

"We should set up this cooperation very quickly otherwise private investors will not spend a moment's thought of going to Albania," he said.

Meanwhile, Albanians had mixed feelings Tuesday about the withdrawal of a multinational security force, stressing the need for foreign help to rebuild their devastated country after months of bloody anarchy.

The Italian-led force of more than 7,000 soldiers from 11 nations will pull out of Albania completely by Aug. 12 after a four-month mission to oversee aid deliveries and ensure elections on June 29 and July 6 ran smoothly.

"It would be better if they stayed longer," said taxi driver Ylli Mezzini. "The situation is still tense and the troops help calm things down."

Tirana student Neraj Berisha said the troops should stay until the new left-centre coalition government, to be appointed later this month after a landslide election victory by the opposition Socialists, settles in.

"The situation here is still bad. The Albanian police have not got the strength to do anything," Ms. Berisha said.

"Everyone here has guns and they are not scared of the police. The police are scared of the people. We need help in getting Albanian authorities working again."

Mr. Vranitzky said an international working group would be set up to help restore law and order and start economic reconstruction in Albania.

"We should help the Albanians to set up a functioning and convincing police force and a judiciary," Mr. Vranitzky told Reuters in a telephone interview Tuesday.

Mars rover prepares to meet 'Yogi'

PASADENA (R) — Having tangled with the likes of "Barnacle Bill," the Mars rover Sojourner prepared Wednesday to turn its attention to "Yogi," in its continuing quest to determine what Mars is made of and whether life ever existed on the red planet.

The little six-wheeled buggy's geological probes of "Barnacle Bill" — so named because it has little markings all over its surface — have already shown that far from being alien, Mars is a lot like Earth, much to the surprise of the scientific team gathered at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory here.

But they expect Wednesday's robotic analysis to show that "Yogi," which scientists said looks like a bear — will be different again to "Barnacle Bill."

From the photographs, they can see that "Yogi" is a lot different from "Barnacle Bill," which was a small, round, bumpy rock with a somewhat different composition, said mission scientist Matthew Golombek.

The Sojourner had been scheduled to scan "Yogi" with its Alpha Proton X-ray Spectrometer earlier in the mission, following the landing in the Ares Basin of Mars last

Friday. But the initial photographs from the lander craft showed the front of the rock was sitting in a hollow, perhaps formed when it was deposited there, either by a flood or being blasted from a nearby volcanic eruption millions or billions of years ago.

This, explained Mr. Golombek at a media briefing, could mean that if the rover was to venture to that part of the rock it might slide into the hollow and bump its solar panels against the rock, depriving its batteries of valuable energy from the Sun.

So the Sojourner spent much of Tuesday taking high resolution, close-up pictures of "Yogi" to determine where it should place its spectrometer against the rock, where it would bombard the surface with protons.

Based on what the probe discovers, scientists hope to be able to determine the rock's composition.

Instructions were to be sent to the microwave-oven-sized rover in the early hours of Wednesday telling it where to take its measurement, probably at the side of the rock where there did not appear to be a depression. Mr. Golombek

said. Meanwhile, the atmosphere at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory remained charged with excitement as Mars continued to surprise the mission scientists.

Not only did the analysis of "Barnacle Bill" show that Mars was more similar to the Earth than even the Moon, it went a long way towards proving that a meteorite believed to have come from Mars and thought to contain fossil evidence of ancient life did indeed come from the red planet.

"Barnacle Bill," said Hap McSweeney of the University of Tennessee, a participating scientist in the Pathfinder Science Project, was probably one third quartz in composition because of the amount of silica it contained.

"I was just floored when it came out silica and I am still struggling with what the implications are. This is more like Earth than our own Moon, which has no quartz on it," he said.

The rover's analysis also revealed the rock's "chemical fingerprints" which Mr. McSweeney said were identical to the 12 meteorites found on Earth that scientists believed originated on Mars billions of years ago.

China capital garbage dump triggers rare protest

BEIJING (R) — Dozens of residents in a Beijing suburb Wednesday staged a rare and daring protest against a nearby garbage dump they say is polluting their air and groundwater and making local people ill.

About 50 residents in Shuangzhuang suburb in Beijing's northwestern Haidian district blocked the road to the garbage dump with cars and bicycles and unfurled banners demanding its closure.

"When the wind blows from the northwest it's really

disgusting and makes us throw up," said one resident who gave his surname as Tao.

Protesters said they launched daily demonstrations six days ago after a petition they sent to local Haidian environmental authorities on June 2 demanding the dump's closure went unanswered.

"As people we have basic human rights," one man said. "I am outraged at this."

An official at the Beijing Environmental Protection Bureau said the authorities were now investigating the

situation and would work out a solution within a few days.

"We have been to the site several times and had contact with the residents' representative," an official said by telephone. He declined to give further details.

Such public protests have been rare in China since the army crushed student-led protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on June 3-4, 1989 with heavy loss of life. Demonstrations about the environment are virtually unheard of in China.

The demonstration comes

at a time when Beijing is eager to present a facade of stability after the handover of the British colony of Hong Kong last Tuesday.

The 13.5-hectare dump opened in March and had far accumulated 500,000 tonnes of trash threatened to contaminate local supply of drinking water, protesters said.

At least one resident, pregnant woman, had been taken to hospital for nausea while many children and elderly had fallen ill because of the smell, protesters said.

The demonstration comes

Koreans mourn their late leader's death. North Korea

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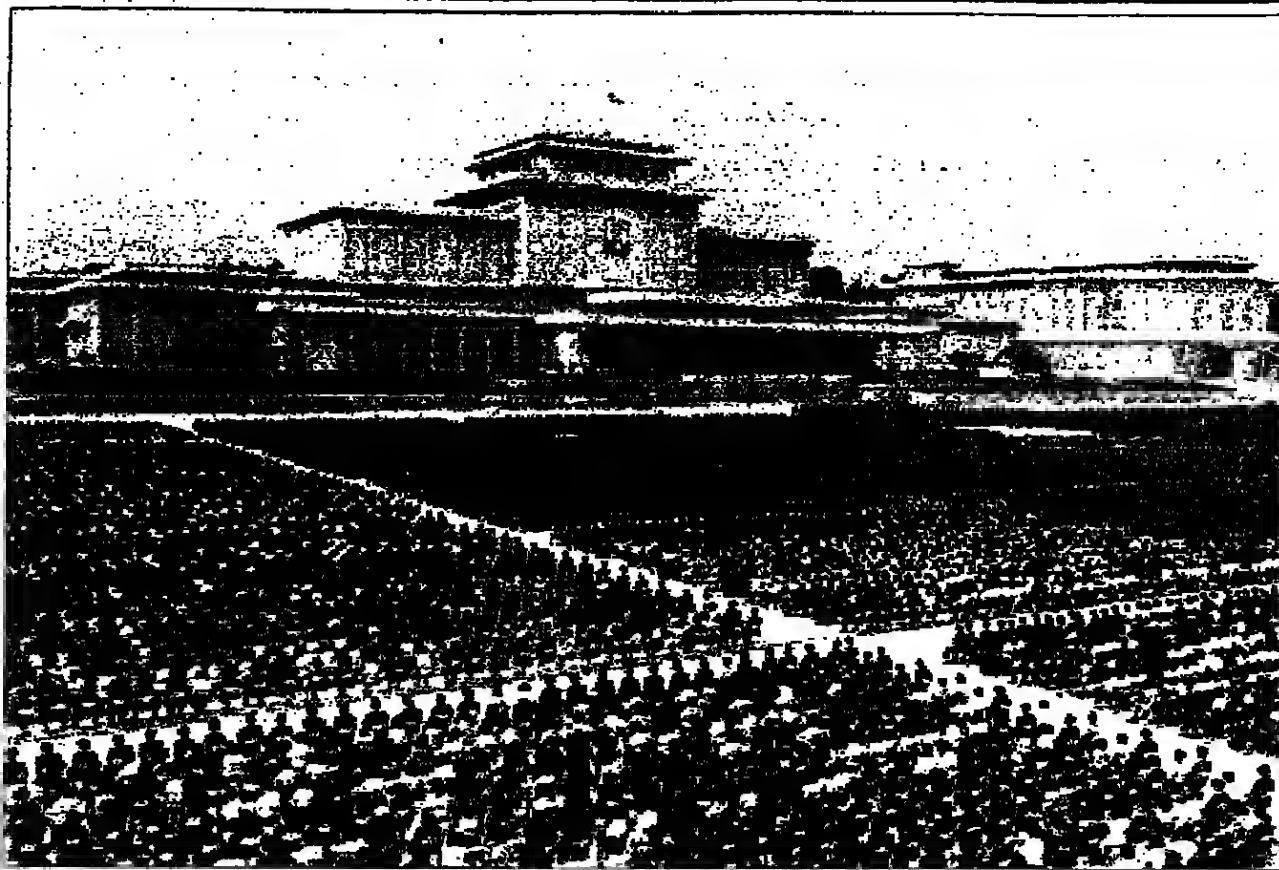
Wednesday handed over to Red

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North Koreans mourn their late leader Kim Il-Sung during a ceremony in Pyongyang to mark the third anniversary of the leader's death. North Korea declared an end to a three-year mourning period (Reuters photo)

N. Korea's 'important broadcast' exalts Kim Il-Sung

TOKYO (R) — In what it had described as an "important broadcast," North Korean radio Wednesday poured praise on its founding father Kim Il-Sung, one day after the third anniversary of his death.

The centre piece of the broadcasts were identical resolutions by the Communist nation's key power groups "exalting the great leader comrade Kim Il-Sung's revolutionary life and immortal exploits for all ages."

The resolutions were by the Workers' Party of Korea Central Committee, the Central Military Commis-

sion, National Defence Commission, Central People's Committee and the Administration Council.

"The resolution notes that it is the firm determination of the Workers' Party of Korea and the unanimous will of all the Korean people to uphold him (Kim Il-Sung) as their eternal leader and...resolutely defend his revolutionary achievements and exalt them generation after generation," Pyongyang Radio and other official media said in broadcasts monitored in Tokyo.

An announcement one hour ahead of the broadcasts, which described them as "important," had set off speculation that it could be a rare speech by Kim Il-Sung's son and heir Kim Jong-Il or a possible announcement of changes in the country's power structure.

However, there was no mention of Kim Jong-Il who is leader in all hut name of the country his father founded at the end of World War II.

Pyongyang announced Tuesday the end of a three-year mourning period for "great leader" Kim Il-Sung, paving the way for his son to take over the vacant posts of state president and gener-

Hong Kong legislature takes 1st steps to roll back colonial laws

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong's new Beijing-created legislature Wednesday took the first steps to scrapping seven liberal laws of the British colonial era, struggling aside noisy protests from pro-democracy leaders.

In a parallel move, the 60-seat assembly agreed to clear aside technical obstacles in order to ram through emergency laws to deport illegal immigrant children from the Chinese mainland.

Chief Secretary Anson Chan moved a bill to bulldoze away the seven laws, which were passed by the elected Legislative Council in a Swansea session in June before it was abolished by China.

Five of the laws strengthen employee protection, including the right to collective bargaining. The two others discourage further reclamation of Hong Kong's harbour and strengthen parts of the territory's Bill of Rights Law.

"Most of these ordinances have far-reaching implications for government policies and operations, which have not been fully considered before enactment," Mr. Chan said.

She took special aim at the collective bargaining ordinance, contending it would cover 1.3 million workers, or 57 per cent of employees in Hong Kong.

"It is likely to disrupt industrial harmony by inducing intense rivalries amongst different trade un-

people who have gone to the immigration department to get their papers in order, the government last week toughened its stance, threatening to send back any illegal migrant.

The first session of the provisional legislature in the parliament building was greeted with protests, dissent and a hunger strike.

Around two dozen protesters, including nine former legislators ousted by the handover, waved banners and chanted slogans, and played a well-known funeral dirge, "Stream, River, Water," as the China-appointed members entered the building. "Today is the day the legislature steps into darkness," the Democratic Party said in a statement.

"The legality and credibility of the provisional legislature has been seriously questioned by the public. It is only a rubber stamp controlled by the executive. Public opinion will no longer be expressed through the legislature."

In the pre-handover legislature the Democrats, led by Martin Lee, were the biggest party with 19 out of the 60 seats. All 19 lost their jobs at the handover but claim still to have a public mandate from their voters.

Hong Kong's top labour organiser, former legislator Lee Chuk-Yan, secretary-general of the Independent Confederation of Labour Unions, began a five-day hunger strike at the dumping of the five labour laws.

Sri Lankan rebels hand over body of dead

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger separatists Wednesday handed over to Red Cross officials the body of a dead North Korean crew member from a ship captured by the rebels this week, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) officials said.

"The dead body has been handed over to the ICRC and we are bringing it back to Colombo to be given to the shipping company," an ICRC spokesman told Reuters.

"The remaining crew will be handed over in the coming days. I cannot say when," the spokesman added.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), fighting for a separate homeland for minority Tamils in Sri Lanka's north and east, seized the North Korean ship Morang Bong late Monday in the seas off Point Pedro on the former rebel stronghold of Jaffna.

The Clandestine Voice of Tigers Radio said Tuesday that one of the ship's 38 crew was killed in a shootout when the crew tried to escape. The ship, chartered by private

traders, had carried food and other essential supplies to the north.

Last week LTTE rebels attacked and torched a refugee ship and took away its nine crew, including two Indonesians who were later released.

Sri Lankan troops killed more than 40 Tiger guerrillas in separate attacks near Nedunkerni in the heart of the guerrillas' northern Wanni stronghold, the Defence Ministry said Wednesday.

Three soldiers were also killed and 18 were wounded when the Tigers attacked troops several times in places near Nedunkerni, 260 kilometres northeast of Colombo, late Tuesday, a ministry statement said.

"Ground troops confirm altogether more than 40 terrorists were definitely killed on this day and many wounded," it said.

Government forces last month captured Nedunkerni after a major offensive launched to open a supply route through the mostly shrub-covered Wanni.

Baltics, Ukraine knock on NATO's promised open door

MADRID (AFP) — The Baltics knocked loud Wednesday on the door NATO has promised to keep open after announcing the first-round winners in its historic expansion into former Soviet Bloc lands.

Ukraine, which signed a security cooperation accord with NATO leaders meeting here for a two-day summit, also reminded the alliance of Kiev's desire for full-fledged membership at some point in the future.

The appeals, both of which go dead-set against Russia's stated position on how much NATO expansion it will tolerate, came as the NATO heads of state and government met with 28 counterparts from neutral and former Communist countries.

The forum was a new security body, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, created as a sort of consolation club for countries not invited to join the alliance so far.

NATO Tuesday extended membership invitations to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, papering over deep divisions within the alliance on whether to also take in Romania and Slovenia in the first wave, due to be completed in 1999.

That would be in time for the 50th anniversary of the Washington Treaty, which founded NATO as a bulwark against Soviet expansion.

The NATO leaders praised Romania, Slovenia and the Baltics for having made progress in strengthening democracy and economic reforms and bringing their military structures up to alliance standards. The leaders promised to keep NATO's door open but stopped short of setting a firm timetable for a second wave of expansion or saying which countries might be in it. There are 12 official candidates so far, including the three first-round winners and the three Baltic republics.

But Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas, after meeting with his counter-

parts from Latvia and Estonia, said Wednesday the Baltics expected to be included in the second wave, and as early as 1999. "Within two years our countries will have made enough progress on the path to reform and stability," he said.

Mr. Brazauskas and the other Baltic leaders met Tuesday with the leaders of the countries due to be admitted in the first round. "All three back our candidacy, and promised to help," he told a news conference.

Russia reluctantly gave in to NATO's planned expansion eastward by signing a wide-ranging cooperation accord with the alliance in late May. But Moscow has adamantly insisted it will review the accord if the expansion goes from including former Warsaw Pact countries to actual former Soviet republics like the Baltics.

Mr. Brazauskas said however he believed Russia would eventually drop this opposition too. "Two years ago no one would have bet on Russia agreeing to enlargement, and look what has happened," he said. "Times change, and Russia must take part in building European security."

Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, addressing the new partnership council, hailed NATO's first enlargement wave. "The decision may be compared as to its symbolic significance only with the fall of the Berlin Wall," he said.

"I would like to stress at the same time the importance of keeping the alliance door open for the European nations sharing the Washington Treaty principles and ready to contribute to European security," Mr. Kuchma added.

Ukraine, which last year gave up the nuclear weapons it inherited with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, has said it wants to become a full member of NATO but accepts this will not happen before NATO-Russia relations have moved on to a much more stable basis.

Rwandans led revolt in former Zaire — minister

WASHINGTON (R) — Rwandan Defence Minister Paul Kagame said this week that Rwandans had planned and led the rebellion against former Zairean President Mobutu Sese, the Washington Post reported Wednesday.

In an interview in Washington Monday, Mr. Kagame told the newspaper that Rwanda had provided training and arms for the rebel forces in Congo, formerly known as Zaire, even before the push to overthrow Mr. Mobutu began last October.

Kagame's account suggests that the war, which began in the eastern Congo near the borders of Rwanda and Uganda, was planned primarily by Rwanda, and that the plan to remove Mobutu originated in Kigali as well, the Post said.

"There are not many people who thought that Mobutu was very weak," Mr. Kagame told the Post. "They thought of Mobutu as a big monster who wouldn't be defeated, with his big hat and his big stick. They thought little Rwanda and big Zaire." Mr. Kagame said. "Only when we started did they look at the map and see the possibilities."

Rwandan forces participated in the capture of at least four Congolese cities — the capital Kinshasa, the southern copper-mining town of Lubumbashi, the key western crossroads of Kenge, and the diamond centre of Kisangani — Mr. Kagame said.

Mr. Kagame, a Tutsi, also responded to allegations that

Tutsi officers of the Rwandan army had ordered massacres of Rwandan Hutu refugees inside Congo.

The Hutus fled to Zaire from Rwanda in 1994 after Mr. Kagame's Tutsi-led army took power in Rwanda, ending a campaign of massacres of Tutsis by Hutu troops and militias. The Hutu refugees feared reprisals for the Hutu genocide of up to an estimated 1 million Tutsis and Hutu moderates.

Asked about allegations that Tutsis were given a free hand by Congolese rebels to attack the Hutu refugees, Mr. Kagame did not deny the possibility of individual atrocities. But he lashed out at United Nations officials who have accused the Rwandan army and the Congolese rebels of massacre.

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Sulking is no way to go

THE JORDANIAN Muslim Brotherhood, and its offspring, the Islamic Action Front, are prominent members of the Jordanian political family: so much so, in fact, that the Brotherhood has managed over the years to establish itself as leader of the other position and, up until now, a staunch but pragmatic force that watched over every cabinet's shoulder for the slightest wrongdoing while being able to adjust accordingly with all developments affecting this small but pivotal country.

Because of this, their decision to boycott the upcoming parliamentary elections is simply an action equivalent to sulking. In any family, the sulking is always done by the weaker members who do not have other alternatives but to sulk and in return hope to get concessions. But the Muslim Brotherhood is not exactly the weaker party in the colourful formula, or has it become so without many of us knowing about the change? What is even more unacceptable about this is the fact that the Brotherhood expects most opposition parties, and opposing individuals, to follow suit.

But what if the government decides to turn a blind eye to the sulking and not give in on the legitimate causes of this political crisis?

The next Lower House has great responsibilities ahead of it, most importantly the passing of the controversial temporary laws that will determine the future level of freedoms Jordanians are to enjoy. A future parliament, without the opposition, will for sure consecrate the passage of the Press and Publications Law, the Electoral Law and will be free to pass any number of other new laws and amendments that will meet the government's direction, whatever that may be, without the least squabble. Without the opposition, the next parliament will also lose one of its most important roles, namely the monitoring of government performance.

The fact that the Brotherhood's higher council of command based its decision to boycott the elections on reasons that include the signing of the peace agreement with Israel, is no more than crying over spilled milk. What should be considered more of a setback than whatever has been done by this or previous governments is if the opposition decides to carry through with its decision and end up playing its politics on the sidelines.

Without a true opposition, one that is dedicated to taking part actively in the democratic process and committed to our national causes, we all stand to lose. With this in mind, both the government and the Islamist opposition should strive to initiate a new round of national debate to save our unique experiment in democracy and political pluralism from imminent collapse.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i Wednesday said it is not in the Arab Nation's interest to hold the Doha conference, where Israel is to be a participant, neither is the conference beneficial for the peace process. The Arabs would lose a great deal if they went ahead with the conference because they will be acting against the efforts of the Israeli opposition and the European nations which have expressed their denunciation of the Netanyahu government's policies, said Tariq Masarrah. He said that the present Israeli government is responsible for the deadlock in the peace process and the present tension in our region, and therefore, the Arabs should refrain from joining the Israelis at the Doha meeting and should deny Benjamin Netanyahu the chance to appear as a friend of the Arabs and a supporter of a peace settlement. There is no need for the Doha conference at all and Jordan should not insist on going, as most of the Arab states have already decided against attending the meeting, he added. Why, asked the writer, should we insist on taking part in a conference that would only benefit the Israelis, at a time when all the peace-loving forces are against Israel's practices and when the opposition parties inside Israel itself are trying to bring down the Netanyahu government which is responsible for the present deadlock in the peace process? If we attend the conference, he said, we will be condoning all the atrocities committed by the Israeli government and will be accepting Israel as a friendly partner, helping its government to achieve its objectives.

A WRITER for the weekly Al Majd said the disadvantages of allowing foreign capital to buy major businesses in Jordan far exceed the advantages, as foreign investors are only interested in making quick profit at any cost and in dominating the markets. Ahmad Nimri said that the concentration of shares of major companies in the hands of foreigners could result in the foreigners imposing hegemony on the local companies boards, directly or indirectly, and steering their course in a manner that would serve their own selfish interests and not those of the country. Opening the country's firms to foreign companies could bring in quick and temporary relief, as more capital will be flowing in, but foreign investors' purchasing of shares will not bring about a real increase in the country's wealth since shares will be merely changing hands from Jordanians to foreigners at the current prices, noted the writer. Selling shares to foreigners, he added, does not necessarily mean a growth in the gross domestic product. The writer called for controls on the process of foreign investors' rush into the market and for not allowing foreigners to own more than 50 per cent of any enterprise.

View from Academia

The pernicious habit of complaining

Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

GENERALLY, THE overall atmosphere in our part of the world is unimpressive. Not only is there not much enthusiasm on the part of others about what one is doing (in the realm of one's own specialty or work and beyond that realm), but there is not much real enthusiasm on the part of individuals themselves about what they, themselves, are doing. Ours is not a culture (at this point in time, that is) which truly encourages seriousness, commitment, public service, innovation, excellence and creativity, even though (paradoxically) it pays a great deal of lip-service (in its written and oral discourse) to all of these.

I had coffee the other day with a colleague of mine who had just been back from a trip to his alma mater in California. We said several things by way of comparing and contrasting our world (and present-day culture) with that part of the world (and its present-day culture). One thing we kept coming to in the conversation was the sharp contrast between people in this part of the world and in that part of the world, in the way they view "life" and conduct themselves in it.

What do we do in most of our discourse with colleagues and friends? Most often, one thing: complain. Life is miserable "ta'isa"; there is no fun; there is not much to do; we are not earning enough money; the circumstances are terrible; there is no appreciation for one's work; there is no joy in life; all is routine; people are not nice; there is no institutional justice; and so on and so forth.

We rarely ask one another about what we are doing, about how we are doing things, about what we have read, what we plan to do, why something worked or did not work, etc.

In other societies, especially in the more developed part of the globe, people hold a much healthier attitude towards life and work. Not only do they devote less time to complaining, they are also generally proud of what they are doing, serious about it, and supportive and appreciative of what others are doing. Over lunch, people (friends and colleagues) discuss not only their personal lives but also their work, their projects, their ideas, their aspirations.

The word "discuss" here is crucial. We do not "discuss"; we complain. Discussion is positive, for it not only releases negative feelings and energy (disappointments, frustrations, stress, etc.) in a healthy way, it also (more importantly) enables those engaged in it to exchange views on problems and obstacles — an intelligent, sympathetic discussion puts matters into perspective.

In addition, one derives a great deal of strength, positive energy, enthusiasm and encouragement from the interest of colleagues, acquaintances and friends in what one is doing, and from their perspective on matters. One is motivated to do more, read more, see more, contribute more and create more. When one feels interest, on the part of the others, in what one does, one feels obliged, in other

words, to do more in order to lay more on the discussion table (as it were). There is a great deal of positive peer and societal pressure in that sense, which motivates people to engage in things, contribute and excel.

In our part of the world, the complaining is generally counterproductive. It may momentarily relieve people from the frustrations and negative feelings, but it is ultimately harmful and even pernicious. After many conversations of this sort, one (especially the one who holds a more optimistic view than others, who takes his/her work more seriously than others and does not like to complain much) may end up feeling discouraged and depressed.

Unlike discussion, complaining demotivates people. It makes them less enthusiastic about what they do, less productive and less creative. And it makes life less attractive and glamorous.

It is, of course, easier to complain than discuss, and at times complaining becomes an end in itself — which is dangerous. Equally dangerous is that fact that for a lot of people in our part of the world, complaining is a mechanism (conscious or unconscious) which enables them to hide behind their laziness, mediocrity, selfishness and failure.

The more we complain, the less we contribute.

A withering peace? Syria and the Middle East peace process

Fawaz A. Gerges

WHILE WORLD attention has focused on Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, observers have ignored a more momentous dialogue, that of Israel and Syria. The Syrian-Israeli peace track is in a deep coma, with little hope of reviving soon. The danger is that this stand-off might easily escalate into a bloody conflict between Damascus and Tel Aviv. A Syrian-Israeli confrontation would endanger the whole peace process and undo whatever gains achieved since the opening of the 1991 Madrid conference.

Senior Israeli and Syrian officials have flexed their military muscles in order to impress each other. Visiting Israel's security zone in southern Lebanon immediately after his election in August 1996, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that any attacks by Hizbollah guerrillas on Israeli targets would have broader repercussions, implying that the Syrian forces in Lebanon would not be immune to Israel's counterattacks. Damascus and Beirut deployed some special forces in Lebanon outside Beirut and the north to the Bekka region. Syria also moved some of its commandos towards Israeli listening posts on Mount Hermon, the northernmost point of the Golan Heights. Israel responded by augmenting its troops on the Golan and in Lebanon. The Israeli army also requested and received \$1 billion to buy extra ammunition and spare parts in order to be ready for war with Syria. Rafael Eitan, minister of agriculture and environment and former chief of staff, retorted by warning Syria that it would be "wiped off the map" if it attacked Israel.

Although both sides have since stressed their intention not to initiate hostilities, violent incidents in southern Lebanon would intensify the pressure on Damascus and Jerusalem to show resolve. Hence, the longer Syrian-Israeli peace talks remain frozen, the more likely it is that the two neighbours might come to blows.

Syrian President Hafez Al Assad has not undergone any conversion to a cosy, warm peace with Israel. Nevertheless, he appears to accept Israel's reality, if not its legitimacy, and the imperatives of reaching a comprehensive settlement with the Jewish state. In this context, Assad has taken a series of steps to prepare Syrian public opinion for peace. It is true that Assad's declared commitment to the peace process is accompanied by a forceful negotiating strategy. Yet this fact has more to do with his drive to extract concessions from and contain Israel than with any ideological aversion to peace.

Furthermore, contrary to

the assertion by some outside observers and politicians, domestic political considerations do not tie Assad's hands nor do they militate against the signing of a peace treaty with Israel. Assad does not face any credible domestic opposition to his rule or to the peace talks with Israel. Despite encountering serious economic and strategic problems since the collapse of its superpower patron, the Soviet Union, the Syrian regime has been able to consolidate itself internally and delink foreign policy from the ebbs and flows of domestic politics.

Syria's strategy and tactics

The Syrian president knows that a clash with Israel would be too costly for him to even contemplate. The collapse of the Soviet Union, coupled with changing geopolitical conditions, has left Syria vulnerable to Israeli military might. Assad can no longer count on the flow of Russian arms, nor can he bank on his Arab counterparts to join the battle against Israel in any future war. Another worrisome concern for his regime is the deterioration of Syrian-Turkish relations and the increasing potential for strife between them. For all these reasons, Syria does not have the means to fight a full-scale war with Israel. When asked to explain Syria's redeployment of its troops in Lebanon and Mount Hermon, the Syrian leader asserted that it was defensive in nature.

Assad's military posturing exemplifies a broad regional and international strategy designed to (1) consolidate Syria's strategic position, (2) counter Netanyahu's declared unwillingness to trade land for peace with Israel, and (3) prevent Damascus' isolation and provide it with diplomatic and political backing in case of an escalation of hostilities with Israel.

Netanyahu's victory caught the Syrians by surprise. The Syrians were led to believe that a victory by the Labour Party was assured, along with a resumption of the Syrian-Israeli talks. Assad hastily arranged a mini summit with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. The three rulers successfully called for and convened the 1996 June Arab summit in Cairo, the first in six years. Although Arab leaders did not go as far as Assad wanted in rethinking their ties with Israel, they gave Syria unequivocal political support on the Golan issue.

In Assad's eyes, the importance of the Arab summit lies in reconstructing a unified Arab front that would enable Syria to withstand Israel's pressure. More importantly, Syria has resurrected an old alliance

with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. This new axis aims to adopt a common Arab policy towards Israel. Egypt and Saudi Arabia have wholeheartedly supported Syria's position, warning of dire consequences if Israel does not withdraw from occupied Arab lands.

A second element in Syria's regional strategy is the promotion of a region-wide consensus by improving relations between the Arab states and their Muslim neighbours, especially Iran. In particular, Assad has succeeded in deepening Syrian-Iranian relations. Senior officials of both countries exchanged visits and signed important economic and political agreements. At the end of June 1996, it was reported that the Iranian leadership proposed to sign a military pact with Damascus along the lines of an Israeli-Turkish military agreement, signed in February 1996, that allows Israeli warplanes access to Turkish bases and airspace. Assad was not prepared to go that far.

Although he wants to keep his ties with Tehran, Assad has to balance his Iranian connection with Syria's important relationships with the Gulf states and Egypt. The Syrian leader also fears the implications of Iranian-Syrian relations for Damascus' role in southern Lebanon. The closer the relationship between Tehran and Damascus, the more likely it is that Syria would be implicated and associated with the activities of Hizbollah. Syria might become more vulnerable to charges of terrorism, thus negatively affecting its relationship with the United States.

Assad's international diplomacy has two facets. First, to show his good intentions, he reaffirmed and reiterated his "strategic commitment" to making peace with Israel in exchange for occupied land. He wants to convince the world that it was Netanyahu, not Assad, who was undermining the peace process. The Syrians believe that the United States holds the key to a final settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Little wonder that President Assad was relieved when President Bill Clinton was reelected to a second presidential term. He thinks that Clinton will continue to resist calls to punish Syria for its alleged support for terrorism and will maintain his commitment to comprehensive peace.

Second, to compensate for his lack of political leverage in Washington, Assad has focused his attention on Europe. The Syrian press poured praise on Europe's efforts, "particularly Chirac's France, to achieve just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East." The Syrians hope to enlist European support to put pressure on Netanyahu and counterbalance U.S. support for Israel. Assad appreci-

A balance sheet: Does Assad want peace with Israel?

Assad harbours deep suspicions about Israel's agenda and role in the regional order. Netanyahu's victory reinforced Assad's perceptions that Israelis are still opposed to peace. This fear explains Assad's determination to prevent Israel from scoring any unilateral gains in the peace talks. According to Israeli and Syrian sources, the former Labour government accepted the exchange of Golan for peace as the basis for a settlement with Assad. Several reasons account for Assad's unwillingness to accept the Labour's offer. First, although Assad's highest priority is to regain the Golan, he wants to ensure that a peace settlement would legitimise Syria's special role in Lebanon and lead to the normalisation of U.S.-Syrian relations.

Second, time is not of major concern to Assad because he does not appear too constrained by internal political considerations or even old age. Unlike some of his Arab counterparts, Assad does not face any credible domestic opposition at home. The bloody 1982 suppression of the Islamists in the city of Hama silenced his main opponents and consolidated his political authority. The Syrian ruling elite also displays a relatively high level of unity over fundamental political-economic issues, including peace making with Israel. Assad's successors would most likely follow in his footsteps by refraining from any radical reorientation of Syria's foreign policy.

Syria's response to Netanyahu's proposals to reopen peace talks should be seen within this context. Assad has made it clear that he will not agree to a resumption of negotiations with Israel until two conditions are met: (1) Netanyahu's acceptance of the Labour government's peace-for-land formula, under which Israel would give up the Golan, and (2) negotiations proceed from where they were broken off in March 1996. In the meantime, Assad is standing fast, hoping to outmanoeuvre and outlast Netanyahu as he has done with other opponents. For as Assad put it, "we are not in a hurry."

Despite Assad's suspicions about Israel's intentions, he appears to accept the imperatives of a peaceful settlement with Tel Aviv.

(Continued on page 7)

LETTERS

First impression lasts

To the Editor:

CONGRATULATIONS ON your editorial "Taken for a Ride" (Jordan Times, July 8, 1997). It is time that such scandals are brought to light in print. There are many of us, who have had the misfortune to have been forced to use airport taxis on occasion, who feel as strongly as you do.

Queen Alia International Airport and the highway leading to Amman are the first things visitors see of the Kingdom and they provide an important first impression of what the country as a whole is like. When arriving passengers are forced to use these taxis, the inevitable picture is one of dismay at the squalor and anxiety for their safety until, on arrival at their destination, they are asked to pay an exorbitant fee — when it inevitably turns to one of anger. Is this the image that we wish to convey to our guests and business visitors?

Some time before my retirement from the Royal Automobile Club (RAC) of Jordan I prepared an illustrated report on the newly installed road signs that had been erected on the airport approach and departure roads. One of the first signs that greets the arriving passengers is one measuring 6X3 metres which proudly proclaims "Welcome to Jordan". There are spelling mistakes on at least four other signs, all of which are in the wrong colour. The report was sent to the then prime minister, the ministers of public works, transport and tourism. None of these mistakes have been corrected despite the passage of almost three years since my report was distributed.

The direction and information signs on the highway leading from the airport to the 7th circle contain a bewildering variety of style and colour combinations, few of which are to be found in any international traffic sign manual. During my tenure at the RAC, we regularly drew such matters to the attention of those in authority, but with disappointing results, varying from total silence to anger at being advised of such matters.

The huge number of street lights which do not work and the litter that abounds at the sides of the highway, not to mention the latest fashion of evening kebabs, picknickers and fruit and vegetable hawkers that congregate in large numbers at the sides of the road, must be a source of amazement to the first-time visitor travelling into town.

All these shortcomings can so easily be put right with minimum effort and the ability to take action on the part of the decision makers. But is it yet another case of "nobody cares"?

Derek H. Ledger,
Amman.

Iso-nation or Iso-lation

To the Editor:

THE RECENT industrial and services sectors' securing the ISO9000 certification, momentous modernistic assurances lies ahead for us when it comes to competing nationally, regionally or globally. Certification promotes great reliance and restoration of levitation of the quality of products produced and extent of services delivered.

To achieve a national objective and a strategic global competitive edge, legislation should be passed to make ISO9000 certification a formal requirement for licensing any new manufacturing installation. Also, legislation should grant existing non-ISO manufacturing installations a grace period to apply for their certification before levying penalties for non-compliance.

This way, quality shall be introduced from the inception of any system, process, product or management technique to be applied or implemented, resulting in a stronger manufacturing infrastructure and better products to be marketed in the global village that we live in today.

Keeping the certification trend going strong, as it did during 1996 and 1997, will gear up other market sectors to follow suit.

Samer F. Qubain,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

A withering peace? Syria and the Middle East peace process

(Continued from page 6)

A number of steps undertaken by him shows that he is committed to a comprehensive peace treaty with Israel. To begin with, Assad has embraced the formula "full withdrawal for full peace." He made it clear that Damascus will end the state of war and establish diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv when the latter withdraws from the Golan. Furthermore, the Syrians have not changed their negotiating position after the election of Netanyahu. While Syrian commentators and officials are disparagingly critical of Likud, they consistently reiterate Damascus' strategic dedication to peace.

Next, after the onset of Arab-Israeli negotiations in 1991, the Syrian government undertook a deliberate effort to prepare the public for peace. Many of the taboos surrounding the question of Israel are now shattered. A visitor to Syria will be pleasantly surprised at the ease with which Syrian citizens discuss Israeli

politics and society. Some Syrian artists and officials have met formally with their Israeli counterparts. Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Shara'a appeared on Israeli television, and Syrian Jews have been allowed to leave the country. Assad has also refrained from attempting to subvert Israel's separate deals with President Yasser Arafat and Jordan.

The political mood in Damascus changed, however, after Netanyahu's victory last summer. Fear and hostility, not hope, now colour Syrians' attitudes towards Israel. This pronounced shift of outlook is not matched by concrete hostile actions against Israel. For example, since Netanyahu's election, Damascus has relatively kept Hizbollah on a tight leash in southern Lebanon, a potential flash point between Israel and Syria. Assad seems determined not to give the Likud government a pretext to preempt him militarily. His approach is also designed to improve his standing in Washington.

A spoiler state?

President Assad's restraint will depend closely on progress made on the Syrian-Israeli peace track. The longer the freeze persists in Syrian-Israeli talks, the higher the probability that Assad will utilise pressure instruments at his disposal to make life difficult for Israel and the United States. Syria may not have the military capacity to fight a full-scale war with Israel, but it can play the role of spoiler. If Assad sees his interests ignored, he could again sanction the escalation of Hizbollah's attacks on Israeli targets, especially on its security zone in southern Lebanon. Syria may also resume its support for the factions in the various Arab states who oppose making peace with Israel. Assad has the will and may have the means to obstruct the whole peace process.

He has other cards to play. Since the election of Netanyahu, Syrian and Iranian officials have been engaged in a serious effort to strengthen and deepen

their relations. In addition, the Syrians have been sending signals about the possibility of an opening to Iraq. Although it remains quite unlikely for the foreseeable future, a Syrian-Iranian-Iraqi axis would radically change the regional configuration of forces and drastically challenge current U.S. Middle East policy.

American officials are keenly aware that a collapse of the Syrian-Israeli talks would weaken their ability to deal with common set of strategic challenges to U.S. vital interests. These strategic challenges include: (A) further radicalisation of regional politics and undermining of pro-U.S. regimes; (B) increasing use of terrorism against American citizens and interests; and (C) strengthening of revolutionary Islamist movements throughout the Arab World. Anti-American sentiments — already widespread — would become more inflamed.

Moreover, the standstill in Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations might negatively

affect the whole peace process, especially Israel's integration into the region. Everything is linked to everything else in the Middle East. Syria has been relatively successful in halting the normalisation of Israel's relations with several Arab states. The Israeli-Syrian stalemate, coupled with difficulties on the Israeli-Palestinian front, has already led to the deterioration of Egyptian-Israeli relations. Egyptian-Israeli relations have reached their lowest point in many years.

The U.S. role

For all these reasons, U.S. diplomacy has aimed at keeping Assad engaged in making peace with Israel and averting a complete breakdown. The Clinton administration has invested much political capital and prestige in the Syrian-Israeli negotiations. Clinton went out of his way to reassure Assad that he is "personally committed to the objective of a comprehensive peace" and realises that "Syria is the key to the

achievement" of this goal. This logic explains former Secretary of State Warren Christopher's dozens of trips and shuttle diplomacy between Damascus and Tel Aviv and his effort to avoid confronting the Syrians on the issue of terrorism.

Since Netanyahu's victory, the Clinton administration so far has taken a low profile towards Syrian-Israeli peace talks. U.S. officials say they are searching for formulas to narrow the gap between Damascus and Tel Aviv and help both countries to resume their negotiations.

Inviting Netanyahu, Muharak and King Hussein to the White House, Clinton discussed with them in details various ways to bring back the Syrians and Israelis to the negotiating table. The fact remains, however, that the administration — actively engaged on the Israeli-Palestinian track — appears to be disinclined to accommodate Syria's demands.

Unlike her predecessor, Madeleine Albright said she has no intention of shuttling back and forth to

Syria. Albright's stand reflects her disillusionment with the previous U.S. approach towards Damascus and her desire to take a tougher attitude towards Syria, particularly on the issue of terrorism. Former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Robert Pelletreau, intimated that Netanyahu is not legally bound to honour the negotiating position of the former Labour government.

It is questionable if this new U.S. approach will be effective in bringing President Assad to the negotiating table. Given the saliency of the Golan to his regime, he probably will not yield to external pressure. Assad is more likely to bide his time and stand fast. If the United States decides to confront rather than co-opt Syria, it had better be prepared for the inherent repercussions. One of the immediate dangers is that the longer Syrian-Israeli talks remain frozen, the more likely it is that the two neighbours will engage in new hostilities, endangering the whole

peace process and damaging the U.S. position as well. Therefore, the stakes involved in Washington's choices are very high, not only for the Arabs and the Israelis but also for Americans themselves.

The writer holds the Christian A. Johnson Chair in International Affairs and Middle East Studies at Sarah Lawrence College, New York. He is the author of "The Superpowers and the Middle East: Regional and International Politics and the forthcoming New Threat from the East? American Foreign Policy towards Political Islam" (Cambridge University Press, 1997). His articles have appeared in Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, Survival, Middle East Journal, New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Christian Science Monitor, Al Hayat and other journals and edited books. This op-ed is part of a larger study on the Arab-Israeli peace process. He contributed it to the Jordan Times.

British political cartoonists sharpen pens on Blair

LONDON (R) - Margaret Thatcher had her handbag, John Major was immortalised wearing underpants over his trousers. But new Prime Minister Tony Blair is a blank page for Britain's cartoonists as they sharpen their pencils for a new political era.

A month after Mr. Blair came to power in a landslide win for his Labour Party, political cartoonists are still experimenting with the man whose photograph and policies will shape Britain for at least the next five years.

"Cartoonists don't grow on trees. They have to be worked out... They must be recognisable and easily repeatable. A good one is a triumph of sophisticated design and hard doodling graft. I foresee plenty of work ahead," said Guardian newspaper cartoonist Steve Bell.

Mr. Blair is not difficult to caricature physically — most of the early cartoons have zoomed in on his large teeth. The problem for satirical cartoonists following a British tradition dating back to the 18th century lies in figuring out what the man who revamped the Labour Party actually stands for.

"No one has yet got a handle on Blair, because everything has been so well managed that little of the personality has come through," said

Dave Brown of the Independent newspaper.

Former conservative Prime Minister John Major, like his predecessor Margaret Thatcher, was a boon to cartoonists as he stumbled from crisis to crisis which seemed to emulate his physical awkwardness.

In a cruelly amusing series called "101 uses for a John Major," he was portrayed last year as a wooden stake support for a sapling tree.

But the most memorable image of Mr. Major was invented by Bell, who drew him as a doomed superman wearing huge underpants outside his suit.

That first cartoon, inspired by a claim that Major habitually tucked his shirt inside his underpants, was drawn within three weeks of Mr. Major's accession to power in November 1990 and it stuck with him as he battled vainly to fill the shoes of Ms. Thatcher.

"It was a tale of superhuman efforts to achieve utterly worthless results, which partly explains the pertinence of the underpants motif," said Bell.

Mr. Blair, more charismatic and at 44 Britain's youngest prime minister this century, poses quite different problems.

"We know he has got big ears, too many teeth and problem hair that he's partial

to wearing suits which make his head look too small that he's religious (or rather we know he says he's religious) but what do we really know about him?" said Bell.

"He's a blank space waiting for circumstance to be filled up."

The first forays into satire have latched onto Mr. Blair's religious leanings and what some commentators describe as his authoritarian tendencies.

"I used to draw Blair with eyebrows up, looking eager. Now he has one eyebrow down, showing his authoritarian tendency. There is a menace that was not there until last year," said Peter Brooks of the Times.

The Observer's Chris Ridell sees something of Ms. Thatcher in Mr. Blair, who has publicly stated his admiration for the Iron Lady's sense of purpose.

He has drawn Mr. Blair with a Thatcher style handbag and bouffant hairdo — an image reinforced by Mr. Blair's surprise consultation with her days before embarking on a series of major foreign summit meetings.

Bell has experimented with the religious angle — Mr. Blair is a committed Christian and his public speeches are often filled with evangelical zeal. Bell drew him as a preacher raving from a pulpit with the cabinet sitting in the

congregation.

"It will probably be at least a year until they come to grips with Tony Blair," said Robert Edwards of Kent University's Centre for the Study of Cartoons and Caricatures.

"It is always entertaining to see how cartoonists go through this honeymoon with a new politician, how they knock about visual metaphors and images and the anatomy of a politician and finally settle in on a blueprint," said Mr. Edwards.

Mr. Edwards believes political cartoons are becoming more strident, particularly in Britain whose tradition dates back to the drawings of William Hogarth in the 18th century.

"You don't have that same kind of vitriol in America where it is a little less aggressive," he said.

Some politicians played up to the cartoonists, notably the late British Prime Minister Harold Wilson who was always portrayed with a pipe but actually rarely smoked it.

Mr. Edwards believes Mr. Blair, who tightly controlled access to himself, his wife Cherie and three young children during the election campaign, is sensitive to how he is portrayed.

"It's not just Tony that has to watch out. It is Cherie and the rest of the family. They are all open targets," said Mr. Edwards.

Moving beyond the memory...

By Harry Hagopian

ON APRIL 24, 1915, close to a year into World War I, thousands of Armenians living in Constantinople were rounded up and force-marched into detention by the Ottoman authorities. This gruesome episode proved to be the beginning of the Armenian genocide in which almost 1.5 million Armenians — one third of the Armenian people at the time — were annihilated.

On Nov. 9, 1938, the Nazis smashed the windows of Jewish shops, burnt their synagogues and rounded up thousands of Jews who were then sent to concentration camps at Sobibor, Treblinka and Auschwitz/Birkenau. That grisly night, Kristallnacht, was only one incident in the history of the Jewish holocaust. Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazis killed more than six million European Jews — almost 60 per cent of the Jewish population.

In both cases, Ottoman Turkey and Nazi Germany had designed and set in motion an entire infrastructure to execute the "final solution" — a systematic and focused policy of ethnic cleansing.

One of the most persuasive and chilling expressions of the nexus between the Armenian and Jewish genocides hangs on the walls of the Holocaust Museum in Washington. It is a quote from Adolph Hitler in 1939: "Who today remembers the massacre of

the Armenian people?" Hitler's soliloquy was meant as a reassurance to his generals who were somewhat queasy at the international repercussions of the planned ethnic cleansing of Jews in parts of Eastern Europe. Hitler's argument implied that the "civilised" world would shrug off the mass killing of Jews just as it had accepted the Armenian mass exterminations some thirty years earlier.

Those historical realities came back to me again this year as the world commemorated the anniversaries of both those heinous crimes against humanity. I started thinking about the lessons we ought to glean from such atrocities. How can I possibly reconcile the magnitude of suffering and the manifest worthlessness of human life in such acts with the fundamental statements of human value and divine concern undergirded by my own Christian faith?

The American philosopher George Santayana once warned that those who forget history are condemned to repeat it. And his warning came true in this case just as it has in many other contemporary programs the world over. If anything, those two genocides should emphasise the need to cry out "Never again!" with resolute courage. But this "never again" proclamation should not apply only to the self. If anything, it should apply equally diligently to all peoples in the world. The

open wounds and painful memories of my own Armenian history should ensure that I refuse to allow this kind of rampant mayhem to befall upon anyone, anywhere, any time! Vietnam, Burma, Zaire/Congo, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Lebanon, Bosnia, Haiti, Cambodia: the world abounds with examples of people hell-bent on destroying other men, women and children.

However, it seems to me that wholesale massacres tend to evoke in people two sets of divergent reactions. According to the Irving Greenberg, they tend to promote an ethic of survival whose inherent psyche requires that the only way to ensure future survival — and thereby to avoid further massacres — is through the accumulation of power. Conversely, Marc Ellis postulates that atrocities of this scale should engender instead an ethic of solidarity with all victims of oppression — wherever they happen to be — whereby the victims of one atrocity will stand in solidarity with others who are themselves being subjected to mass killings and indiscriminate torture.

Consequently, Armenians and Israelis both need to realise that the sense of power is unhealthy. In fact, not only does it fuel further violence, it also fosters self-acclaim and destroys our very distinctiveness as human beings created in the likeness and image of God.

Hebrew scripture counsels us against such attitudes: "Do not let the wise boast in their wisdom, do not let the mighty boast in their might, do not let the wealthy boast in their wealth; but let those who boast ... know, that I act with steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth..." (Jr 9:23-24).

Today, in 1997, it is high time that this cabaret transformation happen among Israelis and Palestinians too. The Jewish people have endured the harrowing experiences and murderous barbarities of the holocaust only to regroup and rebuild themselves. Surely, their own history ought to sensitise them to Palestinian aspirations for self-determination. Surely, it is the ethic of solidarity — not of survival — which should influence them in their dealings with another bruised and dispossessed people. And surely, in their faithfulness to the authentic system of Jewish values, they should remember Ben Zoma, in Mishna Avot 4:1, who asserts "who is a hero — he who controls his impulse." Only then will it become truly possible to move beyond the memory...

Harry Hagopian lives in Jerusalem and has worked for many years in interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

World's most ancient creature thriving in wilderness islands

By Jennifer Little
Agence France-Presse

AUCKLAND — The world's last surviving Jurassic creature is making a comeback.

New Zealand's rare tuatara — otherwise known as a "living fossil" or "miniature dinosaur" — is the only surviving member of an ancient line of creatures stretching back 225 million years to the Mesozoic era (of which the Jurassic period is a part).

While few people have ever seen a kiwi — New Zealand's native flightless bird and national symbol — in the wilderness, even fewer have laid eyes on a spike-backed, lizard-like tuatara which inhabits 25 remote, inaccessible islands around the New Zealand coast.

But a New Zealand Conservation Department project involving the transfer of 32 tuatara from one ecologically threatened

island to a larger nearby island off the east coast of the north island last October, may soon lead to the observation of these ancient creatures in their natural habitat.

Conservation officer Keith Owen said that in the seven months since the reptiles were transferred, all appeared to be thriving and there could be hundreds, if not thousands, on Moutohora Island in the Bay of Plenty within two decades.

Once the colony of 32 has established itself and expanded, "the public will be able to go and see them without problem," he said. The transfer is part of a national tuatara recovery plan to allow research into the creatures, and offer the northern sub-species (one of three) a better chance of long-term survival. Mr. Owen said.

Currently, the only way to see a shy, nocturnal tuatara is at the Auckland Zoo, where two are on

display and six more are part of a breeding programme. Several zoos around the world have tuatara.

Until about 1,000 years ago, tuatara were scattered in great numbers throughout New Zealand's two largest islands as well as on many offshore islands.

But numbers declined rapidly due to fires, land clearing and the arrival of humans, rats, cats, pigs and dogs.

Though the grey, olive or occasionally brick-red reptile resembles a lizard, strictly speaking it is not one. It belongs to the sphenodontida (meaning "wedge tooth") order which has no other living representatives.

The slow-moving, unblinking tuatara lives for up to 60 years, weighs up to 1.3 kilograms and grows to 60 centimetres, sheltering in underground burrows that have been tunnelled by nesting seabirds.

Females lay up to a dozen eggs every four years, and tuatara have been successfully bred in captivity and returned to the wild through a programme at Wellington's Victoria University.

Conservationists estimate there are still around 10,000 tuatara distributed over 25 nature reserve islands off the New Zealand coastline. Some populations are threatened by rats which eat their eggs, but most live on rat-free islands.

New Zealand's far-flung Moutohora Island may only attract die-hard dinosaur buffs and scientists keen to catch a glimpse of this creature which has survived millenniums of geological upheaval.

But for conservationists, the tuatara's proliferation and well-being is something of a modern miracle. "We really don't have the answer to why they survived," Mr. Owen said.

Rural Japan looks to foreign women to ease depopulation woes

TOZAWAMURA, Japan (AP)

With two young children screaming nearby and a thick-set mother-in-law watching her every move, Imelda Hayasaka appears harried.

But the Philippines native is shouldering more than just domestic burdens.

Like 22 other women from poorer Asian countries, she was brought to this mountain village of some 7,000 people to help solve a crisis sweeping rural Japan — the lack of brides.

Tozawamura's dilemma is part of a slow but debilitating exodus from Japan's countryside.

Nationwide, rice fields lie fallow because young people are abandoning farming. Villages are gray faster than the already disconcerting national average. More and more women are opting for single life in the cities over the rigors of married life on the farm.

In villages like Tozawamura, where there are three unmarried men for every single woman, trying to counter depopulation has meant some

radical measures for this homogeneous society.

Ten years ago, the local government started to double as a marriage agency for its forlorn bachelors — many in their 40s and 50s — linking them up with women from the Philippines, Thailand, South Korea and other Asian countries.

"This is one of the ways we are trying to help sustain the life of our village," said Haruo Yaguchi, head of Tozawamura's Planning Department.

Nationwide, there were more than 20,000 marriages between Japanese men and foreign women in 1995, a tenfold increase over 1970, the Ministry of Health and Welfare says.

In the county where Tozawamura is located, the number of foreign women married to farmers jumped to 185 a year from 10 a decade ago. Tozawamura is 290 kilometres north of Tokyo.

The numbers are still small measured against the overall population. Tozawamura's county, for instance, has 99,000 residents.

But the increasing number of

foreign brides is injecting a melting-pot feeling to areas that have traditionally been among Japan's most conservative.

"The Chinese brides have begun teaching kids and housewives how to make Chinese dumplings," Mr. Yaguchi said. "The events have really brought people together."

Not everyone welcomes the international flavour, though.

"People are grumbling privately that the influx of foreigners is going too far," said Isao Sato, a taxi driver.

Still, community leaders see few options.

A government study conducted in 1992 estimated the population of Japan's farming towns will drop 65 per cent over the next 30 years to under 9 million.

The median age for farmers, meanwhile, rose to 60 in 1990 from under 42 in 1960. Despite huge agricultural subsidies, only about 1,700 high school or college graduates become full-time farmers every year, less than one-third the number a decade ago.

Those who do stay on are

usually first sons, who feel duty bound to carry on the family farm, and they often have trouble finding women willing to take on the burdens of being a farm wife.

A bride is immediately thrust into a pattern of caring for ageing in-laws, waking up early to perform daily chores and, most importantly, bearing children.

Many foreign newcomers are in for the added shock that the standard of living in the Japanese countryside — though higher than that in most of Asia — is a far cry from the cosmopolitan affluence of Japan's big cities.

"When I first arrived here from Seoul, the only thing I could see were red signboards in a field of white snow," said Taeko Shitara, a Korean who married a man in the nearby town of Higashine seven years ago.

Farmers seeking foreign wives spend as much as \$20,000 on marriage broker fees, trips abroad and presents to the prospective bride. The "bride price" paid to the woman's family can run up to \$3,000.

MPs slam Lebanon's economic policies

BEIRUT (R) — Opposition Lebanese members of parliament have slammed the government of billionaire Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri, saying it had failed to boost economic growth and reduce social hardships after five years in power.

They said at the opening of a two-day parliamentary session intended to evaluate the government's performance that the budget deficit had jumped beyond official forecasts for the year while public debt was still ballooning.

Mr. Hariri formed his latest cabinet last November, the third since he was appointed premier at the end of 1992 when he launched an ambitious billion-dollar reconstruction drive.

His opponents have frequently complained that the reconstruction programme was draining state

coffers of funds that could have been directed at development.

"For five years, we have been on the opposition side, advising (the government) to reschedule priorities... For five years we have been warning against a reconstruction programme... that could sink the country in debt," member of parliament Nassib Lahoud said.

"And for five years, the government has been turning a blind eye, closing its ears in arrogance," he told deputies at the televised session.

The government has denied ignoring social issues and said the reconstruction drive would eventually raise the standard of living.

Former Prime Minister Salim Al Hoss, citing economic indicators, said the economy was in bad shape

while the Lebanese pound's purchasing power continued to erode.

"The growing budget deficit is the core of the Lebanese economic sickness. It is the reason behind the speeding of national savings on budget needs rather than developing private productive sectors," Mr. Hoss said.

He cited finance ministry statistics showing that the budget deficit of revenue against expenditure in the first five months of 1997 reached 56.32 per cent, widely exceeding forecasts of 36 per cent at the end of the year.

"During the budget debate, we spoke of the non-realistic optimism of the government and estimated the expected deficit for the year at over 50 per cent," he added.

Mr. Lahoud demanded that the government

explain why servicing the debt equalled total budget revenues.

The finance ministry has said that total public debt at the end of May stood at about \$11.8 billion.

Leftist member of parliament Zaher Al Khatib accused the government of failing to ease poverty.

Analysts said government has recently faced pressure from former Hizbollah leader Sheikh Sobhi Tufaili who on Friday launched a civil disobedience campaign in the Bekaa Valley at a rally of several thousand supporters.

The Shiite cleric has called on Bekaa residents to join his "hunger revolt" and not pay utility bills and taxes to highlight poverty in the region which is suffering economically from a crackdown on illegal drug crops.

Tietmeyer sees European joblessness as structural

BASEL, Switzerland (AFP) — European unemployment is structural and it is not the business of monetary policy to solve that problem, German Bundesbank President Hans Tietmeyer has said.

The chairman of the central bank governors' committee that meets in Basel every month insisted, in speaking to correspondents, on the structural nature of joblessness in Europe, reacting to frequent criticism of

the rigidity of monetary policy in Europe.

The Bundesbank chief said "we need less concentrated investments, i.e., aimed at increasing productivity, but on the other hand we need more investments better distributed over new job-creating activities."

"Other reforms are also needed in continental Europe to overcome the labour markets' rigidities," he added.

Meanwhile, the outgoing chief of Europe's central bank-to-be says Europe's high unemployment rates, undesirable as they might be, should pose no obstacle to a single European currency.

In an interview, Alexandre Lamfalussy said joblessness in Europe was "really wrong... It is a sign of waste, and it is ethically and socially unacceptable."

But he stressed that unem-

ployment — now at post-war record levels in Germany and France, the biggest European union economies — should not endanger the push to a single currency in 1999.

"You can live in a monetary union with high unemployment, though this would not be desirable," said the Belgian head of the European Monetary Institute, forerunner of what will be the European central bank.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, JULY 11, 1997

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Get an early start on business matters this morning, and you can accomplish a great deal towards your success. Be sure to get plenty of rest later this evening so that you can handle the hectic days ahead.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Get the information you need before beginning a new project today, and avoid being interrupted. Stick to your schedule at this time and you will get your career activities completed and gain recognition.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Stop beating around the bush today, and be straightforward when presenting your ideas to others. Enjoy the company of your mate later this evening and plan something special which he or she will find fun.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Put aside personal matters for today, and concentrate on improving your financial status. Be sure to drive with the utmost care while on the highway and thereby you can avoid any difficult situations.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) If a fellow associate seems a bit confused with a new project today, offer to help him or her. If you do so, you will have made a good long-lasting friend who you can depend upon when the time arises for answers.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You can accomplish a great deal today by using your creative abilities. Have a good time tonight, however you should not spend too much money so that you are short of funds when the need arises.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Get your house fixed up early today, as you may have unexpected guests later this evening and you want to make a good impression as the perfect host. Make some sensible plans for the days ahead which can be productive.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) It is very important that you handle all of your correspondence today, which you have neglected. You should not go off on any strange journeys this evening, otherwise you won't get anything accomplished.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Take the time to organise your assets and liabilities today so that they will be easier to handle in the days ahead. Your property may need a repair, so study the situation and devise a plan of attacks for completion.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Your organisational ability is good today, you should not waste time and use it to your best advantage. Have fun with your close friends involved in recreational activities which everyone will enjoy.

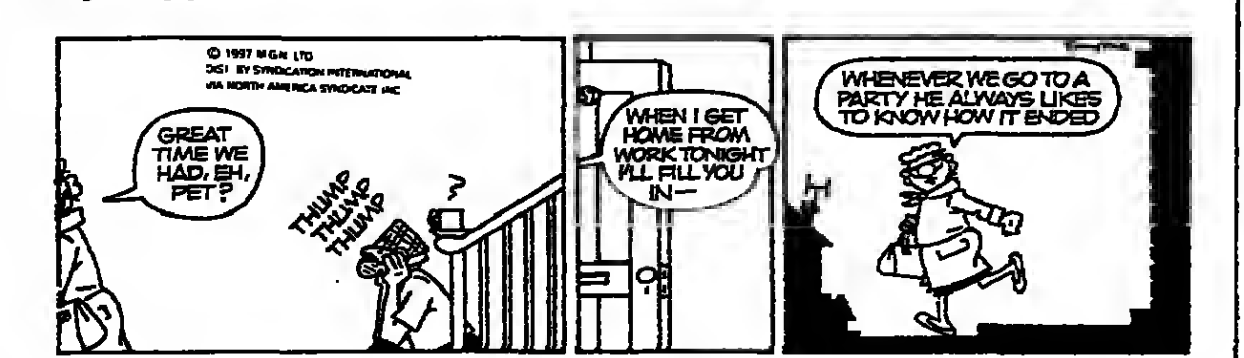
AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You would be wise to stop daydreaming today and handle an important personal matter. Your mate may need some special attention later this evening, so don't hesitate to show your affection to him or her.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Visit a few old close friends today, as these people can offer you some valuable advice for becoming successful. It is important that you use much care in motion of any kind so that you won't get into any difficult situation.

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	GRD
US Dollar	1.7617	0.5634	1.4629	112.73	1.3736	1718.28	1.3641	8.3464	
DE Mark	0.5676	1.0000	0.3368	0.6336	0.7798	16.25	1.2253	2.3786	
GB Sterling	1.8853	2.9880	1.0000	2.4639	169.89	2.3148	2886.87	3.3389	10.0237
CH Franc	0.6836	120.38	0.4058	1.0000	76.88	0.8378	1173.57	132.84	0.8038
JP Yen	0.0089	1.5613	0.6285	1.2967	1.0000	1.2178	16.23	178.86	8.2728
CA Dollar	0.7281	1.2769	0.4316	1.0682	1.22	1.0432	134.73	134.73	0.6827
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0247	0.3448	0.0851	1528.85	0.7986	11.54	3.4887	
NL Guilder	0.3648	68.79	0.2888	0.7341	66.77	0.8823	888.71	1.2876	
FR Franc	0.1682	0.2868	0.0296	0.4631	18.83	0.2307	32.51	33.3100	

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	GRD
US Dollar	1.7617	0.5634	1.4629	112.73	1.3736	1718.28	1.3641	8.3464	
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	0.7060	0.3750	3.8400	0.3024	3.6718	1836.00	3.3876	
GB Sterling	0.2688	0.1888	0.1005	0.97	0.0808	0.96	408.25	0.8032	
Bahrain Dinar	2.88	1.3780	0.3485	6.86	0.8021	8.78	3071.75	2.9888	
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1345	0.0604	0.604	0.0631	0.61	421.70	0.8306	
Kuwait Dinar	3.3089	2.3413	1.2404	12.404	1.2404	12.404	4078.00	4.0306	
Emirates Dinar	0.2724	0.1328	0.0602	0.6024	0.0624	0.624	418.00	0.8228	
Lebanese 1000	0.85	0.4812	0.2433	2.433	0.1970	2.2918	118.00	2.2918	
Egyptian	0.2852	0.2890	1.1072	0.1113	1.0748	0.0893	1.0838	453.14	

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	GRD
SA Riyal	0.2888	0.4888	0.15843	0.3085	30.0734				
AE Dirham	0.2724	0.47982	0.16184	0.3085	30.0734				
KW Dinar	3.3089	2.3413	1.2404	12.404	1.2404	12.404	4078.00	4.0306	
BH Dinar	0.3778	0.47982	0.16184	0.3085	30.0734				
CY Pound	1.9211	1.3844	1.1414	2.814	216.534				

Metal Prices									
Metal	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit
Gold (oz's)	377.8	318.3	Silver (oz's)	4.28	4.31	Platinum (oz's)	397	401	
AL (3 Months)	1.567	1.568	CU (3 Months)	2.258	2.272	Zinc (3 Months)	1.460	1.481	
Lead (3 Months)	647	650	Ni (3 Months)	6905	6915				

Main Equity Indices									
Bourse	Index	Change	Index	Change	Index	Change	Index	Change	Index
New York	DOW JONES	7914.13	-48.13	-0.61	7891.28	7913.22	7962.51		
New York	S&P 500	913.86	-2.89	-0.31	922.03	913.86	914.78		
London	FT-SE 100	4784.5	0	0.13	4778.1	4784.5	4784.5		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	19997.17	-194.72	-0.97	19995.5	19997.17	19997.17		
Paris	CAC 40	2944.86	18.05	0.61	2978.64	2944.86	2929.81		
Frankfurt	DAX	4055.88	-49.46	-1.23	4088.00	4055.88	4055.88		

JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	GRD
US Dollar	0.708	0.710							
GB Sterling	1.1531	1.1501							
DE Mark	0.4018	0.4038							
CH Franc	0.4432	0.4488							
JP Yen	0.1191	0.1197							
NL Guilder	0.3588	0.3587							
IT Lira	0.4128	0.4138							

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- Infamous lab assistant
- Campus military org.
- Fuss
- "Old, grey" animal of song
- Less polite
- Declare
- Mideast native
- Soap or horse follower
- it a day (quit)
- Fats Domino hit
- Dendrologist's concern
- Cereal grass
- Picard
- Blanc
- Energy unit abbr.
- Actress Turner
- NM resort town
- Slingy
- Ancient
- Brusque
- Pitdown Man, for example
- Enjoy
- Vane dir.
- Large
- Most wen
- Miss Brooks' (TV oddie)
- Ill-tempered one
- Children's game
- "Country" Slaughter
- Takes a chance
- Diving bird
- nois
- Indian people
- Trademark
- Pulsate
- "Edward Scissorhands" actor
- Belgian river

DOWN

- Yankee Doodle Dandy
- Togs
- Nuncupative
- Debate denials
- Far East currency
- Baltic Sea feeder
- Land: abbr.
- Junior's art medium?
- Impiled
- Elipse
- Sarbie or Ken
- Night bird
- Flack or Peters
- Before
- Incubate
- China unit
- Desert delight
- Nap, noisily
- V-8, e.g.
- Workplace safety assn.
- Contradict
- Shoots the breeze
- In a snit
- Tennis great
- Jed Clampett, for one
- Remove a wrastap
- High-speed train
- Wore away
- Surprised sound
- Beginning
- Coop sound
- Geneticon joint
- Small amount
- Cab charge
- Word after ego
- "Gentleman" author
- Theater box
- Abate
- And not

by Kenneth Witte

5 Far East currency

6 Baltic Sea feeder

7 Land: abbr.

8 Junior's art medium?

9 Impiled

10 Elipse

11 Sarbie or Ken

12 Night bird

13 Flack or Peters

14 Before

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